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***ENERGEIA, NOUS AND NON-DISCURSIVE THINKING***  
**IN ARISTOTLE**

A thesis submitted to the University of Bristol  
in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Faculty of Art

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is divided into three parts. The first is concerned with the different uses of the term *energeia*. I argue that the term has many different applications in Aristotle but in its perfect sense it describes the divine *nous* and its noetic activity. I also claim that although individual human noetic activity is also described by Aristotle as an *energeia*, this is a different sense of the term *energeia*. For the human *nous* contains potentiality and its noetic activity also cannot exclude the threat of relapsing into potentiality.

I also investigate the concept of *nous*, particularly in *De Anima*. I argue that Aristotle employs the term with different senses in several contexts and the language of divinity used by him is far from implying that the individual human *nous* is divine.

The second part is an enquiry into the concepts of discursive and non-discursive thinking. It deals with the essential features of discursive and non-discursive thinking in Aristotle. I claim that non-discursive thinking is best described by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9 where Aristotle actually tells us the nature of the divine *nous* and its noetic activity. I also try to elucidate the relation between the terms *energeia*, *theoria* and *eudaimonia* in relation to metaphysical and ethical concerns.

In the final part of this thesis I examine the interpretations of Aristotle's theory of the intellect, with special reference to the question of discursive and non-discursive thinking. In the course of my investigation I have come to see that Aristotle's conception of discursive and non-discursive thinking has been completely misconceived, mostly due to the neo-platonising efforts of Aristotle's theory of intellect.

Islamic Aristotelian commentators in particular attempted to relate the individual human *nous* to God by way of individual experience which was based on non-discursive



intellectual activity, in spite of the fact that Aristotle nowhere speaks of participation of the human *nous* with God. Non-discursive thinking activity has nothing to do with coming into contact with God: that is why I argue that we are left with nothing but the task of demystifying the concept of discursive and non-discursive thinking in Aristotle.

The third part contains a critical survey of interpretations of Aristotle's theory of intellect by ancient, Islamic and recent commentators.

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I finally offer my thanks and gratitude to Dominic and Helen Lane whose unconditional support and true friendship have literally saved the present work from disaster.

I, Hatice Nur Erkizan, declare that the work contained in this thesis  
is entirely my own, and that I received no assistance  
in its composition.

The views expressed in this thesis are intended  
in no way to represent the views  
of Bristol University  
and are solely those of the author.



9 - 12 - 1997

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Words have determinable sense only within a complex of unstated assumptions, all interpretation must therefore go beyond the given material. Understanding of another's philosophy is an aspect of the interpreter's own philosophical growth and the result should not be, because it cannot be, assessed as matching or missing an unknowable and possibly non-existent 'original version' but as an intelligible and (hopefully) plausible way of seeing the world that is developed by meditation on the chosen tradition. (Stephen R.L. Clark)

Interpretation is always re-creation, whether good or bad, ... (Stephen R.L. Clark)

An interpretation of Aristotle must be assessed upon other grounds. That it should be unduly elegant and the like may indeed be required but it must also pretend at least to some degree of truth, and especially practical truth. If the thoughts suggested to us in our reading of Aristotle have no practical consequences for us to enact then our reading is clearly 'inauthentic' far more truly than in some trivial anachronism. It is also barren. (Stephen R.L. Clark)

Every writer creates his own predecessors and so does every philosopher. (Stephen R.L. Clark)



## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to investigate discursive and non-discursive thinking in relation to human and divine thinking in Aristotle. The discussion of the ethical and metaphysical implications of the discursive and non-discursive thinking is also central to this study. The main texts to be inspected are *De Anima*, *Metaphysics*, *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*. Although the former two will receive a lot more attention, the latter two are also indispensable to this enquiry.

What is the nature of discursive and of non-discursive thinking? What place do the two kinds of thinking have in Aristotle's philosophy? What are their ethical and metaphysical implications? Why does Aristotle distinguish these two kinds of thinking?

It is well known to those interested in discursive and non-discursive thinking that the activities of intellect are divided into two kinds, one of which is called discursive and the other non-discursive. The former involves change, for example from one element of a thought to another, or a logical transition from a premise to a conclusion. Non-discursive thinking, on the contrary, excludes any sort of change.

As far as I am aware, the discussion of discursive and non-discursive thinking has been strictly confined to the distinction between the discursive activity of the intellect (*dianoia*) and the intuitive activity of the intellect (*nous*). However, it is clear that Aristotle does not keep a clear distinction between the two types of activity of the intellect.<sup>1</sup> Again, in *Nicomachean Ethics* at 1125a 29, *phronesis* is called the opposite of *nous*. The relation of *nous* to sensation comes from *De Anima* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. For at 427b 8-9 *nous* makes all kinds of judgements and is not infallible at all.<sup>2</sup> One should therefore bear in mind that Aristotle does not automatically identify discursive thinking with *dianoia* and non-discursive thinking with *nous* in the case of

human thinking, but the position is different for the divine *nous*. It is also true that Aristotle uses the term *nous* in several contexts. This is why it is important to distinguish the different meanings of the term *nous* in Aristotle, without which the conception of discursive and non-discursive thinking is bound to remain obscure.

I believe that knowledge by intuition is a myth and that the identification of non-discursive thinking with intuition is doomed to be mysterious at best, if not completely vain. That is why I do not intend to investigate discursive and non-discursive thinking in Aristotle in relation to epistemological concerns. Instead, I turn to *Metaphysics*, *De Anima* and *Ethics* in my investigation of the subject which will enable an investigation of the subject of discursive and non-discursive thinking in relation to ethical and metaphysical questions.

In doing so, the analysis of certain terms, namely *nous*, *energeia*, *entelecheia* and *theoria*, appears to be absolutely crucial to an understanding of discursive and non-discursive thinking. For Aristotle describes the noetic activity of *nous* as *energeia* regardless whether it is human or divine thinking. To the best of my knowledge, there have been no attempts to explain discursive and non-discursive thinking in this context. I am therefore very well aware of the real possibility of failure in doing so. But then, I immediately return to Aristotle himself to defend myself against the army of Aristotelian scholars and what I read in *Metaphysics* XII, particularly chapters 7 and 9, *De Anima* III.4 and 5 and *Nicomachean Ethics* X, reassures me that I am not completely at a loss in my attempt to understand the subject matter in this way.

Aristotle's replies to questions are not dogmatic. It is his approach to refuse to press for a single answer when the reality points to several. Therefore, the best strategy appears to be that one should begin with particular problems, a particular text or a particular term so that through this one may hope to reach a solution that a certain



problem demands. As what Aristotle says is related to our experience, our life, our world, it is the purpose of this study to show the significance of the conceptions of discursive and non-discursive thinking to our experience of noetic activity.

Aristotle never advocated that a philosopher should seek a mystical revelation which separates him/her from others. He also does not ask whether the world we live in is real or not. He insists that we must try to solve problems by setting out exactly what has been said about the problems but not hoping to solve them with a prayer for sudden insight. That is why intuition plays no role in my effort to understand discursive and non-discursive activity of the intellect.

It is important to note that there has been an enormous amount of interest in Aristotle's theory of intellect in the past two decades or so, which also witnessed a resurgence of activity in the philosophy of mind. The complex nature of the subject has been addressed by philosophers of mind and their endeavour to solve problems in the field have made us appreciate the subtlety of what Aristotle says, particularly in *De Anima*, *Metaphysics* and *Ethics*.

There are three terms which are indispensable to the investigation of the discursive and non-discursive thinking in Aristotle, namely *energeia* / *entelecheia*, *nous* and *theoria*. By the analysis of these terms I intend to demystify the conception of non-discursive thinking, and also hope to discover the real spirit of Aristotle's theory of non-discursive thinking. For after all, Aristotle nowhere occupies himself by trying to decode the knowledge that *nous* might possess. His main aim, however, is to differentiate the process of searching for knowledge from coming to understand reality. In other words, to bridge the gap between the intellect and the world.

In *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9, Aristotle describes divine thinking as pure activity (*energeia*). It excludes any sort of potentiality and thus any kind of change. Divine

*nous* has no contrary to itself. Although human noetic activity is also described as *energeia*, it is nevertheless not immune to change. How, then, is one supposed to understand divine noetic activity and human noetic activity? Are they different from each other? Why does Aristotle connect happiness with the activity of *nous*? These questions are of course central to the investigation of this project but it would be wrong for me to think that I have given satisfactory answers to all of them.

It is true that Aristotle describes both human and divine thinking as *energeia*. One of the loftiest achievements of human *nous* is thus considered to be thinking in terms of *energeia*. However, one should be careful about the different applications of the term *energeia* in Aristotle. Human noetic activity has two aspects, one of which is searching for and the other knowing reality, to come into contact with reality. It is obvious that the process of searching for knowledge is imperfect and incomplete. It has an end, it has to cease at some point. That is why I call this process of seeking for knowledge 'kinetic thinking'. On the other hand, the human noetic activity does not stop with kinetic thinking. The search has an end and that is where it gives way to the state of *energeia* which I call 'active thinking'. In 'active thinking', one is in touch with reality. It has nothing to do with contemplation of concepts or propositions, for thinking of reality is bound to be discursive and it is always of the expression of reality but not reality itself. In active thinking, human *nous* seems to eliminate the threat of change. However, this cannot be so for the individual human *nous* for it always has the danger of falling into the state of potentiality. It cannot go on thinking continuously. In addition, the individual human *nous* shifts from the state of activity to the state of potentiality. Thus I argue that although Aristotle describes human thinking as *energeia*, this does not allow itself to identify with divine noetic activity. For divine noetic activity excludes any sort of potentiality and change, it does not even suffer from the slightest

change.

Thus, although human noetic activity has kinetic and active aspects, divine thinking activity is described as pure *energeia*, which is why it is important to note that one should distinguish the different meanings and applications of the term *energeia* in Aristotle. I also conceive the conception of discursive and non-discursive thinking in the light of Aristotle's definition of thinking in terms of *energeia*.

*Metaphysics* XII signifies the climax of Aristotle's thought and in *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9 Aristotle describes the nature of divine *nous* and its thinking activity. It emerges that divine noetic activity may be importantly different from human noetic activity. The formulation of the divine noetic activity as *noeseos noesis* marks the important difference between human and divine thinking, for the formula is not used anywhere else to describe human thinking. The characterisation of divine noetic activity as such, I argue, is nothing but perfect non-discursive thinking as *energeia*.

Although it appears that human noetic activity as *energeia* can be considered as non-discursive, nevertheless there are serious questions about whether human non-discursive thinking is the same as divine non-discursive. One therefore might speak of the relativisation of the concept of non-discursive thinking in Aristotle.

The analysis of the concept of *nous* in Aristotle is also crucial to the investigation of the subject of discursive and non-discursive thinking. The reason for this is that Aristotle employs the term *nous* in several different contexts. In the first place, it is spoken of as a capacity to think in the individual. In *Posterior Analytics* it is conceived to be the source of the principles of knowledge. In addition, Aristotle speaks of *nous poietikos* in *De Anima* III.5 which is described as pure *energeia* and something that makes everything actual. In *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9 the Unmoved Mover, or God, itself is *nous*, which is the principle of everything on which the universe depends.



It is obvious that the term *nous* does not have a single meaning in Aristotle. It has different uses in Aristotle's philosophy. Once this is established, one of the biggest difficulties in understanding discursive and non-discursive thinking will be removed.

It is also well known that Aristotle has a penchant for treating *nous* as something divine. He provides the account of human thinking mainly in *De Anima* III.4 and 5, *Ethics* and *Metaphysics*. How are we supposed to understand what is meant by calling human thinking something divine? Aristotle's use of language seems to be always tentative, which is why I argue that it is very difficult to establish any genetic identity between the human and divine *nous*. He seems to speak of the divinity of the human *nous* and its activity in terms of as-if divinity, if that is the case one could speak merely of relativisation of divinity in relation to the human *nous* in Aristotle.

Once it is established that the human *nous* does not share the same ontological status with divine *nous*, then one is in the right position to discuss whether human noetic activity is identical with divine noetic activity. It has also been said that one should bear in mind the different meanings of the term *energeia* in Aristotle too.

To sum up, the analysis of the terms *energeia* and *nous* are indispensable to the discussion of human and divine thinking in this study. Since I identify divine thinking with perfect non-discursive thinking, it becomes crucial to discuss human thinking as *energeia* and see whether human noetic activity is identical with divine noetic activity or not. It also becomes important to discuss any possibility of ascribing non-discursive thinking to human thought.

It seems that my account of discursive and non-discursive thinking faces at least two problems, one of which is the danger of presenting Aristotle as more fully involved in the discussion of the subject than he really is. I know of no way to eliminate the risk of anachronism in advance. We can look at a given account and examine how

accurately it follows the text, but this can be done in more than one way. However, one of the extreme ways of doing this is 'narrow textualism' which insists on following the literal message dogmatically. In this case, one argues that if Aristotle did not say it then we have no right to claim that he might have meant it. On the contrary, 'wide intentionalism' allows the text to be interpreted in virtually any way one would like. Then the problem of consistency arises and it becomes very hard to eliminate the constraint of consistency. Of course it would be wrong to assume that there are pure examples of 'narrow textualism' and 'wide intentionalism' but they nevertheless exist in some forms. The point is that the text is not as undetermined as wide 'intentionalism' assumes, nor as determined as 'narrow textualism' presumes. The latter tends to be strictly historicist and in virtue of this, interpretation is bound to be constrained by problems that were set by pre-Aristotelian philosophers and so on. I do not wish to deny the importance of considering the historical side but it leaves the problem it originally aimed to address untouched. This is particularly true of Aristotle. He proposes theories which are themselves of sufficient complexity and completeness, which is why we are able to consider and investigate his theories on the basis of shared theoretical concerns. Nonetheless, I shall pursue several complementary strategies for interpretation which I hope will help me in explaining the subject matter.

I will also try to avoid studied scepticism that is primarily concerned with producing a single coherent account which does justice to the variety of texts we have at our disposal. Some say that what Aristotle says about, for example, *nous*, particularly the *nous poietikos*, does not fit into a central theory of *De Anima* or *Metaphysics* or the *Ethics*. Other Aristotelian commentators have despaired of giving any role to *nous poietikos*. Others have gone so far as to argue that Aristotle merely contradicts himself on the subject so that it is wrong even to think that one can consider the question of *nous*



*poietikos* in the light of Aristotle's general account of the intellect. As a result, recent studies on Aristotle appear to focus on selected parts of what Aristotle says here and there, and I believe this has resulted in diminishing the power of Aristotle's thought. In this study I wish to remedy their negative approach by trying to give an account of discursive and non-discursive thinking by and through a comprehensive treatment of the concept of the intellect in *Metaphysics*, *De Anima* and *Ethics*.

In addition to examining particular passages, some of which stand on their own, this study has three main purposes:

1. to show that Aristotle's conceptions of discursive and non-discursive thinking are to be understood in the light of analysis of the terms *nous* and *energeia*;
2. to provide an account of Aristotle's views on human and divine thinking;
3. to raise questions about any isomorphism between human thinking and divine thinking.

I am particularly interested in seeing how far a certain line of interpretation of Aristotle's theory of thinking can be achieved. Those merely interested in the first aim might say that Aristotle coined the term *energeia* and so, of course, the formulation of human and divine thinking requires no justification. This is not true, however. It is far from being a settled matter. I shall try to prove that precisely the opposite is the case. In addition to bearing in mind the different meanings of the terms *nous* and *energeia* throughout the study, I will devote Chapter 1 to clarifying the meaning of the term *energeia*. I maintain that there is no single meaning of the term in Aristotle. This will, of course, provide only a partial view of his conception of discursive and non-discursive thinking. One factor that also appears to be absolutely crucial to the full picture is the global role played by the term *nous*. That is why Chapter 2 deals with the concept of *nous* in Aristotle. It emerges that the term *nous* is used in several different contexts by



Aristotle.

Chapter 3 expounds Aristotle's theory of intellect, what I call the theory of human thinking. This theory, which is introduced in *De Anima* III.4, fits neatly with a naturalist reading of Aristotle's theory of intellect in general. In particular I argue that *nous poietikos* does not belong to the human individual but, on the contrary, it is identical with the divine *nous* of *Metaphysics* XII.9. Aristotle's theory of thinking then takes on a distinctly diverging flavour when we also add the fact that, besides the different applications of *nous* and *energeia*, the language of divinity does not also *ipso facto* countenance that human thinking is identical with divine thinking.

In Chapter 4 I shall first investigate the concept of discursive and non-discursive thinking in general. Then I particularly deal with the nature of non-discursive thinking in Aristotle. I argue that non-discursive thinking is superior to discursive, for the former is complete (an *energeia*) whereas the latter is incomplete (a *kinesis*)

The interpretation of *nous poietikos* I am proposing here diverges from that of almost all interpretations thus far and carries with it a considerable number of interpretive demands. Furthermore, as far as I know there is no single study which deals directly with the problem of discursive and non-discursive thinking in Aristotle, let alone considers the topic in the light of *De Anima*, *Metaphysics* and *Ethics*, arguing that in *De Anima* III.5 *nous poietikos* is the same as the divine *nous* of *Metaphysics* XII.9. I am not only isolating the account that admittedly best suits a Neoplatonist theory of mind but also giving it an importance over other things Aristotle says about *nous poietikos*. It is also well known that he has other things to say on the subject, some of which seem to be incompatible with his formulation of human thinking. Thus Chapter 5 will deal with the problem of a divergence between the human and divine noetic activity in relation to discursive and non-discursive thinking in Aristotle. It also argues that the

human *nous* does not share the same ontological status with the divine *nous*. I also discuss that although Aristotle conceives of human thinking in terms of *energeia*, nevertheless it appears that divine noetic activity differs importantly from the human noetic activity.

Chapter 6 explores the relations between the terms *theoria*, *energeia* and *eudaimonia*. *Theoria* is defined as perfect *eudaimonia* by Aristotle and it also turns out to be described as an *energeia*, for *eudaimonia* cannot be *kinesis* and is not for the sake of something. Here the distinction between the terms *kinesis* and *energeia* becomes crucial to the understanding of discursive and non-discursive thinking. In a sense, the distinction enables us to understand the kinetic-destructive, kinetic-incomplete nature of discursive thinking and the complete-perfect nature of non-discursive thinking. It also transpires that the distinction also plays a very important role in understanding the nature of divine happiness and human happiness. In sum, Chapter 6 is concerned with the implications of discursive and non-discursive thinking in connection with psycho-ethical questions.

Providing Aristotle with a thoroughly naturalistic account of human thinking is recommended by his use of the term *nous*, which can also be viewed as a desideratum in its own right. Chapter 3 has already dealt with an especially vexed issue, the status of the *nous poietikos* in *De Anima* III.5. I have argued there that *nous poietikos* does not belong to the individual so that the conclusions reached of the relation between the terms *theoria*, *energeia* and *eudaimonia* in Chapter 6 also implies that divine non-discursive may not ascribed to the individual human being.

In Chapter 7 I shall try to expose and examine the views of commentators on Aristotle's theory of intellect in general. I wished to write a chapter which may help to show how the question of different types of thinking has been perceived throughout

many centuries. In addition, Chapter 7 tries to demonstrate somewhat vague conceptions of discursive and non-discursive thinking in previous conceptions of Aristotle's theory of intellect. I am particularly interested to see how interpretations of Aristotle's theory of intellect may be related to the discussion of discursive and non-discursive thinking. In a sense, Chapter 7 tries to discover the interpretations of Aristotle's theory of intellect and their implications in relation to psychological, ethical and metaphysical questions.



I am very concerned to counter an increasingly popular view, namely ultra-rationalism, particularly in one of its recent guises which countenances that human and divine thinking are the same in kind. In order to establish the claim, it identifies the divine *nous* of *Metaphysics* XII.9 with the *nous* of *De Anima* III.4 and 5. I raise questions about the suggestion that they are the same in kind. I shall argue against this partly because the arguments for the view fail, mainly because human *nous* does not share the same ontological status with divine *nous*. Thus it is possible to think that human noetic activity may not be the same as divine noetic activity. Although human thinking accepts *kinesis* and *energeia*, divine thinking is described as pure *energeia* which excludes any sort of *kinesis*. In a sense, then, it is the conception of divine *nous* as being pure *energeia* that establishes the difference between the two types of thinking.

It will be quite obvious to anyone familiar with recent discussions on the subject that much of what I say in this thesis runs against contemporary received opinion, which is why I devote much attention to major competing views. I also acknowledge the stimulus I have received from this impressive body of studies. The first cause of this project could be traced back to my first introduction to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* at the University of Aegean, Izmir, Turkey in the autumn of 1985. During my MPhil studies on the relation between *energeia* and *entelecheia* at the University of Essex, the subject kept occupying my mind relentlessly. I decided that what Aristotle meant by characterisation of divine thinking in *Metaphysics* XII.9 and human thinking in *De Anima* III.4 and 5, could be made clear by looking at the terms *nous*, *energeia* and *theoria*. This was more than a decade ago and my mind has been intermittently occupied with the details of the theory ever since.

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## Notes to Introduction

- 1.. See for example *De Anima* 427a 23 and *Nicomachean Ethics* 1143a 25. Aristotle also calls `nous' *praktikos* at 433a 14 but *dianoia praktike* in line 18.
- 2.. It is also useful to compare 427b 27 with 1139b 17-18. Of the infallibility of *nous*, see *De Anima* 435a 26 and 428a 17-18; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1139b 17-18.

# I ON THE NATURE OF ACTIVITY (*ENERGEIA* / *ENTELECHEIA*) AND MOTION (*KINESIS*) IN ARISTOTLE

The aim of this study is to investigate discursive and non-discursive thinking in relation to psychological, ethical and metaphysical questions in Aristotle. In doing so I shall particularly concentrate on what Aristotle says in *Metaphysics*, *De Anima* and *Ethics*. Certain terms are crucial to the analysis of discursive and non-discursive thinking, namely *nous*, *energeia*, *entelecheia* and *theoria*. Let us now start with an investigation into the term *energeia* in Aristotle.

## 1. On the Terms *Energeia* and *Entelecheia*

It is rather surprising that the origin and uses of the terms *energeia* and *entelecheia* in Aristotle have received little attention, whereas his philosophical development has been subject to intense scrutiny.

Aristotle was puzzled by the question of change, as were his predecessors. However, he did not turn away from the fact of change, instead he tried to explain it and his explanation is one of a very radical nature.

There are two terms used by Aristotle to describe 'what-is-not *kinesis*' or 'what-is-not-in-motion' in Aristotle, namely *energeia* and *entelecheia*. The latter is less frequently used than the former. However, they both describe something that is 'what-is-not *kinesis*'. Both terms have no pre-Aristotelian history, they are simply coined by Aristotle to explain his new understanding of reality.<sup>1</sup>

That is why one cannot hope to get any help by looking at a dictionary in order to understand what the terms *energeia* and *entelecheia* mean. Rather, one has to go back to the texts of Aristotle to discover what he means by them.



Reading Aristotle in translation conceals the meaning and importance of these terms in Aristotle's philosophy for, as soon as one consults the Greek text, certain problems are inevitably confronted. Why are there two terms to denote 'what-is-not *kinesis*'? Why did Aristotle feel any need to coin these terms to explain reality? Do the terms *energeia* and *entelecheia* have a single meaning in Aristotle? If they have, why does the Oxford translation as well as others translate the term *energeia* sometimes as 'actuality', sometimes as 'activity'? If both terms supposedly mean the same thing, why is *entelecheia* translated as 'actuality', 'fulfilment' and 'complete reality'?<sup>2</sup>

It is not difficult to see that *energeia* and *entelecheia* are not simply ordinary terms which are analogously and ordinarily used to explain reality by Aristotle, but they are very much technical terms and are used to describe the fundamental and radical understanding of beings by Aristotle.<sup>3</sup>

The etymology of the word *energeia* suggests that it describes inner or inward activity. The part of it, *en* means 'in' and *ergeia*, which is the noun from *ergein*, which is a rare active form of the common verb *ergasthai* which means 'to do' or 'to act'. The use of the active form indicates the intensity of activity, therefore it may be inferred that Aristotle might have deliberately chosen the active form to mark that *energeia* describes activity which is not directed outside itself.<sup>4</sup>

I have raised questions above, rendering the term *energeia* as 'actuality' in essence. It appears that it is wrong and futile to translate it as actuality from the etymological point of view. I also try to outline briefly why it is so by pointing out different applications of the term *energeia* in Aristotle.

There are eight principal uses of the term *energeia*, which are the following:

1. It is of beings except potentially existent.<sup>5</sup>
2. It is of perfection.<sup>6</sup>

3. *Energeia* itself describes *ousia*.<sup>7</sup>
4. *Energeia* in the meaning of actualisation which is used only for those beings that are subject to change and then include the potentialities.<sup>8</sup>
5. *Energeia* in application to sensation and thinking.<sup>9</sup>
6. *Energeia* is different from *kinesis*.<sup>10</sup>
7. *Energeia* in its application to divine *nous*.<sup>11</sup>
8. It signifies the highest good.<sup>12</sup>

Of the different meanings of the term *energeia*, three of them are most relevant to our present purpose. These are: (i) the principle of highest good, (ii) divine *nous* as *energeia*, and (iii) *energeia* as opposed to *kinesis*. Thus I would like to explain them in some detail.

Although I have said at the beginning that there are eight principal meanings of the term *energeia*, nevertheless they could also be grouped as follows.

- i) The term *energeia* signifies activity of a subject. In other words activity necessarily involves a subject and it varies according to the ontological status of the subject. There is a necessary relation between the quality of an activity and of the quality of its subjects.<sup>13</sup> Human and divine noetic activity belong to this group, for both require subjects.
- ii) Actuality or actualisation: in this sense, the term *energeia* describes biological and physical realities. Anything that is actualised is also actual. It excludes any sort of subjective or individual activity and hence they should be distinguished from the first group.

## 2. *Energeia*: the Principle of Highest Good

In Aristotle, human life is mainly characterised by two chief activities, namely



thinking and knowing. All movements are subject to necessity to some extent, whereas all activities, particularly thinking and knowing, are directed by the subject and are not subject to necessity. That is why intellectual and ethical life are of activities. In this context the term *energeia* signifies a definite activity of soul which distinguishes humans from other beings.

Aristotle tells us of the natural human good in *Nicomachean Ethics* at 1098a 15-65, that (a) human good is activity, (b) ethical life consists of activities, (c) activities are the activities of *nous* and (d) what is active is perfect.

Although human beings happen to live in the world of *kinesis*, there is something within us, that is our *nous*, that enables us to stand above the flux. In virtue of being able to be involved in the activity of thinking, human beings can realise their real self, which happens to be *nous*. Aristotle, in his enquiry into the nature of the highest good as far as ethical human life is concerned, arrives at the conclusion that the human good which is happiness is the activity of soul in accordance with virtue and, if there is more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete. Aristotle also tells us in *Nicomachean Ethics* (X, 7, 7-22) that this activity is thinking activity. In his own words:

If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be that of the best thing in us. Whether it be reason or something else that is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it be itself also divine or only most divine element in us, the activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness. That this activity is thinking (theoretike).<sup>14</sup>

What this passage shows is that there is an intrinsic relation between the terms *energeia* and *nous*. Our happiness is defined in terms of the activity of *nous* (*energeia* and *nous*), however it remains to be seen whether the human happiness is the same as divine happiness (see the discussion of human and divine thinking in Chapter V).

I believe that to elucidate the meaning of *energeia* in its application to divine

*nous* will also shed some light on our discussion of divine noetic activity. It should be said once again that Aristotle does not employ the term *energeia* in a single way. On the contrary, he applies it to different cases. Aristotle also appears to suggest that the quality of the activity is dependent on the ontological determination of beings in the first place. The distinction between *energeia* and *kinesis* serves very well to confirm that idea. All beings have some sort of share of activities but only *perfect being* or God is pure *energeia*. This enables us to make connection between the ontological structure of beings and their activities. This distinction is made particularly clear in *Metaphysics*, XII. Aristotle endows God with perfect activity. Divine *nous* in *Metaphysics* as pure activity is neither the exercise of capacity nor the actualisation of potentiality. As opposed to human *nous*, it is the activity of a *perfect being*, God, which has no potentiality in it in any sense. There cannot be any sort of actualisation, for there is no need for it and no desire to actualise anything. The subject of pure activity is therefore the *perfect being*, God. In other words, only God is to be described as pure *energeia*.

As human beings we are generally inclined to think of something which is of a *kinetic* nature, therefore we have *positive feelings* about those concepts which imply changing, progressing, completing etc. In virtue of this it is almost unthinkable for us to think of something which is not completed but complete, which is not perfected but perfect, which is not what it is now but is what it is for ever. In describing the nature of divine *nous*, Aristotle abolishes all kinds of developmental concepts. It appears that one source of our inability to understand motionless activity is our tendency to think of only motion-like perfection or activity.

In his inquiry into the principle of movement, namely in *Metaphysics* XII, Aristotle arrives at the conclusion that the principle of eternal motion must be pure activity. He identifies it with Unmoved Mover that is also called *nous*, 'God', and



finally 'thinking of thinking'.

### 3. On God and Being Absolutely Potent

Beings could be said to be impotent or potent in virtue of these reasons:

- a) to be capable of changing for the worse (*eupatheia ton kheirenon*)
- b) to be capable of changing because of being impotent (*katan adynamian*)
- c) to be resistant to change either for the worse or good (*apatheia*)
- d) not to be capable of being changed (*dyspatheia*)

(see Soulhe, J., 'Etude sur le terme Dynamis, Paris, 19.19; Vocab. de Philos, V. Puissance, 654-655 with a note of Robin; See also Tricot, J., La Metaphysique with commentary, Paris, 1370, Alex C 387, 38 and 390.21; and also compare Metaphysics, XII. 1073a 5 and 1073a 10).

Among the different senses of the term potency it seems to be possible that d) is of God. It has no potency to change in any way. What moves is independent of that which is moved. However, the moved is not independent from the ontological point of view, here it is dependent on the mover and is open to affection by the other.

God as pure *energeia* is also absolutely potent in terms of not being affected by anything. It moves without being moved. It is something eternal which is both substance (*ousia*) and actuality (*energeia*). It is neither changeable nor corruptible (Metaphysics, 1072 a 29-30; 1072 a 25-27), it exists necessarily. However, it seems to be difficult to perceive incorruptible but changeable substance in the same way. Furthermore how can we consider the activity of that which exists necessarily and is what it is necessarily with that the cause of its existence lies in somewhere else than itself and its activity to be the same? Let us imagine that there are A and B:

- 1. A is what it is forever
- 2. B is like A sometimes.

B neither exists necessarily nor acts in the way necessarily. What we can infer from this example is that B may cease to exist at some time and its action, as a result, stops.

Although B has participated in the activity of A for some time can we still say that just because of this B's activity is nothing different than A? (See Metaphysics XII – 6 and 7 in particular).

#### 4. **Perfection and Imperfection: *Energeia* versus *Kinesis***

The reality of perfection and imperfection is not mythically rooted in the philosophy of Aristotle. There are in essence two sorts of 'movements', namely *energeia* and *kinesis*. They are thought of beings which are to exist in different ways.

*Energeia* and *kinesis* are attributed to beings which are subject to change, whereas there is only one sort of being, that is *perfect being*, God, which excludes any sort of *kinesis*. The distinction between *energeia* and *kinesis* has been the source of confusions but I believe that the distinction between *energeia* and *kinesis* provides a radical understanding of reality. The reason for this can be explained as follows.

1. It enables us to interpret the universe from an ethical and aesthetical point of view.

2. The *energeia* and *kinesis* distinction establishes the foundation of ethical life.

However, the ontological equality on the basis of ontological aristocracy is superseded by the ability of subjective realisation of the self. One simply and necessarily has to distinguish the life of movement from the life of activity, both of which are said to constitute the aspects of human beings but in a different way. Let this suffice as preliminary remarks on the question of *energeia* and *kinesis* and as an outline of the fundamental differences between *energeia* and *kinesis*.

I will not go into a detailed discussion of how to distinguish *energeia* from

*kinesis*, but just state generally accepted differences between these two terms, which are:<sup>15</sup>

- i) *energeia* is complete in every moment but *kinesis* is incomplete;
- ii) *energeia* is perfect whereas *kinesis* is not (the imperfection arises from incompleteness);
- iii) *kinesis* is subject to time but *energeia* is not.<sup>16</sup>

*Energeia* has its own telos within itself whereas *kinesis* is directed to something external. In the case of *energeia* there is nothing outside to reach in order to become complete, while *kinesis* has its end outside itself, and in virtue of that *kinesis* is incomplete, imperfect for the end of constructing, walking from Aphrodisias to Thebes lies beyond that movement. The second and third aspects of *energeia* are closely related to the first feature of *energeia*.

## 5. A Further Note on the term *Entelecheia*

The etymological explanation we get from Liddel's and Scott's dictionary allows us to understand the word 'entelecheia' to denote something 'at an end' or complete. However, the alternative explanation given by Blair seems to be more suitable. The 'en' is an obvious parallel to that of *energeia*. The *telos* in the accusative makes it possible to render the term *entelecheia* as 'having an end within itself'. The etymological explanation given by Liddel and Scott makes it possible to render the term *entelecheia* as 'being at one's end' but following Blair the term *entelecheia* signifies possessing one's end inside oneself.<sup>17</sup>

I conclude my discussion of the terms *energeia* and *entelecheia* by saying that no matter what, the translation of these two terms as 'actuality' is wrong. In essence, *energeia* means 'activity' and *entelecheia* describes the internal possession of the end.



## 6. On the Principle of Destruction (*Kinesis*) and Activity (*Energeia*)

As I have already said, the terms *energeia* / *entelecheia* and *kinesis* are used throughout Aristotle's writings. However, there are no common points of agreement as to how to translate them into English, nor of their meanings in general. Most importantly, the terms *energeia* / *entelecheia* and *kinesis* have received almost no attention in relation to Aristotle's conception of discursive and non-discursive thinking, which I believe has been the source of real difficulty, particularly in understanding the nature of discursive and non-discursive thinking. I believe that without the clarification of the nature of *energeia* / *entelecheia* and *kinesis*, the concept of discursive and non-discursive thinking in Aristotle is bound to be blind. Only through gaining a real insight into those terms can discursive and non-discursive thinking be demystified.

Some recent Aristotelian scholars have virtually dismissed any sensible conception of non-discursive thinking by saying that it excludes any sort of excitement on the part of those who are engaged in intellectual activity.<sup>18</sup> Others have come to identify the process of seeking knowledge with the aim of seeking.<sup>19</sup> In other words, those such as Rorty appear to neglect the very fundamental difference between *energeia* / *entelecheia* and *kinesis* and as a result of her mistaken approach there is no difference left between the process of searching to know and *to know*, the means and the end, and discursive and non-discursive thinking (see Chapter VI).

Although Aristotle speaks of the distinction between *energeia* and *kinesis* in terms of tense-logic, others have reduced the difference to merely linguistic scrutiny which has also resulted in missing the real concern in Aristotle's radical understanding of reality in the light of the concept of *energeia* / *entelecheia* and *kinesis*.<sup>20</sup> I believe that the distinction between these two terms determines the whole of Aristotle's thought and therefore it is vital to understanding Aristotle.

First of all, it appears that it is wrong to confine the distinction between *energeia* / *entelecheia* and *kinesis* to merely linguistic logic. For by and large most of the verbs have the form of present perfect and present continuous in English; for example cooking, cleaning. However, the important thing to remember is that some of our actions contain their *telos* within themselves whereas some others do not. In other words, they are directed to particular ends, for example seeing, living, being happy, walking in the sense of strolling (*spazieren*) which are their own ends and in virtue of being their own ends these sorts of activities do not have to cease. The important passage on the subject comes from *Metaphysics*:

Since no action which has a limit is an end, but only a means to the end, as e.g. the process of thinning; and since the parts of the body themselves, when one is thinning them, are in motion in the sense that they are not already that which it is the object of the motion to make them, this process is not an action, or at least not a complete one, since it is not an end; it is the process which includes the end that is an action. E.g., at the same time we see and have seen, understand and have understood, think and have thought; but we cannot at the same time learn and have learned, or become healthy and be healthy. We are living well and have lived well, we are happy and have been happy, at the same time; otherwise, the process would have had to cease at some time, like the thinning process; but it has not ceased at the present moment: we both are living and have lived.

Now of these processes we should call the one type motions (*kineseis*) and the other actualisations (*energeiai*). Every motion is incomplete - the processes of thinking, learning, walking, building - these are motions, and incomplete at that. For it is not the same thing which at the same time is walking and has walked, or is building and has built, or is becoming and has become, or is being moved and has been moved, but two different things; and that which is causing motion is different from that which has caused motion. But the same thing at the same time is seeing and has seen, is thinking and has thought. The latter kind of process, then, is what I mean by actualisation (*energeia*) and the former what I mean by motion (*kinesis*).<sup>21</sup>

I would first like to say that Aristotle's argument about the distinction between *energeia* and *kinesis* is not merely based on tense-logic. His point is that *energeia* describes activities which are not relative to an end but contain their end. It is not that they do not take time, rather they are not completed by a process by which they become complete. The second important point that distinguishes between *energeia* and *kinesis*, made in the passage above, is that *energeia* is not directed to a particular end, it is the



end and in virtue of being the end it is complete and perfect. The other passage which also supports this line of understanding *energeia* with reference to teleological concerns comes again from *Metaphysics*:

... in some cases the ultimate thing is the use of the faculty, as e.g. in the case of sight seeing is the ultimate thing, and sight produces nothing else besides this.<sup>22</sup>

It could be said that the passage conveys the view that with regard to some faculties, their function, their activity is the only *telos* of their being, for there is nothing toward which that activity is in turn directed. However, this is not in conflict with the point I have been making.

Although the analysis of the terms *energeia* / *entelecheia* and *kinesis* from linguistic points of view may be useful, nevertheless I believe that it does not enable us to gain a real insight into the conception of reality as *energeia*. Aristotle is much concerned with the nature of motion and activity. At the end he comes to define reality (*ousia*) as *energeia*.<sup>23</sup> That is why I argue that understanding reality as being *energeia* requires more than linguistic analysis of some verbs.

As Aristotle himself says in the passage just quoted, there is nothing external to an *energeia*, for example seeing. Building, on the contrary, cannot be thought of without 'having been built'. The *telos* of building is having built but the *telos* of seeing it is just seeing. The *telos* of *kinesis* is not included in it whereas *energeia* is the acting itself. In other words, there is nothing to identify it with but itself. Seeing and having seen occur together for they are one and the same thing. Also, note that it is not the case that *energeia* lasts long or can go on indefinitely, whereas *kinesis* is destined to cease. *Energeia* is complete in the sense that its completeness is present in every instant of its occurrence. It is indivisible in the sense of excluding any sort of potentiality and change. This sense of the *energeia* describes the *ousia* of God and its thinking activity as well as human thinking (see Chapter 5, section 4).



This is why Aristotle says that possessing knowledge is superior to seeking it, for seeking has no end in itself. It cannot go on for ever, it has to cease at some point. For example, the process of solving a problem can only be ended when the problem is solved. It would be rather absurd to say that one can go on busying oneself with it without aiming to solve it. As far as the human noetic activity is concerned, searching for truth can be no other than *kinesis*, and it is not intelligible without active thinking, i.e. to come to understand reality, to contact reality, which has no aim beyond itself.<sup>24</sup>

The real issue here is not that discursive thinking cannot be *energeia* but discursive thinking cannot be its own end and because of this discursive thinking is not be considered *energeia* qua discursive thinking. I can only be defined in relation to the aim of knowing reality. It is important here to note that in *Metaphysics* IX.10 Aristotle tries to investigate how we can contact, how we can know reality. This is also Plotinus' problem that he is committed to deal with. (Lloyd, AC 258-65)

Thus it would be wrong to confine non-discursive thinking to merely possession of a knowledge and contemplation of it. Discursive thinking as searching (*kinesis*) is incomplete. Its aim is to contact, to know reality. Contemplation of a mathematical truth which one knows and one's ability to go over the same mathematical proof is an indirect relation to reality. This was a view shared by some members of Plato's Academy. They considered knowing reality as superior to the process of searching. (1153 a 8-g; for example Speusippus; 1177 a 25-7)

It is also important to remember that there is a possibility that one may not be able to think of the same mathematical proof that one knows for some external and internal reasons. However, contacting reality as in the case of non-discursive thinking is all or nothing affair. One simply cannot chose to know or not to know reality. One either knows it or does not know it. But one may not be able to exercise his/her

capacity for some reason.

It is this distinction that is missing from Sorabji's account of thinking, and I believe also that for the same reason he comes to bless the *kinetic* nature of seeking and dismisses non-discursive thinking on the ground that it does not produce any excitement.

I am not saying here that the human noetic subject can eliminate the necessity of the laborious searching process to understand, because we are not God, but it is wrong to identify the *telos* of our intellectual activity with the process of searching. In other words, it is against the Aristotelian spirit to conceive the human noetic activity in this way. The means is not and cannot be the end.<sup>25</sup>

I have already said that there are different applications of the term *energeia* and Aristotle employs them in several different contexts, which is why it is possible to talk about divine *energeia* and human *energeiai*. In *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9, divine *nous* is described that of which *ousia* is *energeia*. Aristotle also applies the term *energeia* to perception, to ethical matters and the human thinking. There are many questions about how to understand divine thinking and human thinking as *energeia*. For example; is there a genetic relation between the human *nous* and divine *nous* ? Is human noetic activity the same in kind as divine noetic activity? What Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* about the nature of divine *nous* and its noetic activity can help to clarify the difference between the human sort of *energeiai* and divine *energeia* in which any sort of potentiality is absolutely excluded. Aristotle says there that it seems to be the case that there is no distinction between activity and potentiality without reference to motion.<sup>26</sup> In the case of the human sort of *energeiai* the reality of potentiality cannot be completely dismissed. On the contrary, there is no place for motion in divine *energeia*. Returning to Aristotle's question of the distinction between activity and potentiality, it is interesting to see that this poses a very important question for first philosophy and it is included in the



list of *aporiai*.<sup>27</sup> Aristotle answers the question by saying that "activity is above all motion".<sup>28</sup>

The superiority of *energeia* to *kinesis* is obvious. The root of such a view could perhaps be traced back to Ancient Greek philosophical tradition. Note that *energeia* as activity is contrary to passivity. This might prove that the Greek philosophers were inclined greatly to perceive reality in terms of activity rather than in terms of passivity.<sup>29</sup>

Reality as activity is demotionalised, not because reality becomes inactive but it becomes its own end. It is freed from the threat of destructive *kinesis*. It is what it is to be something. That is why, although Aristotle did not question the reality of change, he nevertheless did not perceive beings as always changing for no purpose or that beings are in flux for ever. In other words, in Aristotle's view the world is not chaotic. For him, there are individual beings which yearn to realise their nature and manifest their identity in the world as becoming their own end. That is why circular motion, of which each is part, is as much the end as any other, is conceived as being the most proximate analogue to divine being. Non-discursive thinking is also of the same nature. There is nothing incomplete to be completed later. In virtue of this, it excludes any sort of change. It is the only way to contact reality. For this reason it cannot be contemplation of some truths because contemplation of some truths are of reality but it is not to contact reality. For example, one can produce propositions of reality but one may never know what reality is.<sup>30</sup>

I believe that the misconception of reality as *energeia* by Aristotle has led some scholars to bless *kineticism*. Children love colourful and moving things but when they grow up they consider their past actions as some sort of laughing matter, for when we are children we conceive everything in relation to one big motion that we never want to stop, for example playing, dancing, running. It appears that those who find the



unchanging yet active perception of reality as something distasteful or boring, rather resemble children who hate growing up and give up the deceiving, unreal pleasure of change.

For Aristotle, reality is unmoved yet not inactive. What lies at the centre of the universe is that which is complete, perfect and fully active. That is substance or *ousia* or being as an activity. It manifests what it is to be such and such a being. For example, it is for an individual to shine forth with humanity, in other words to realise what it is to be a human being. Aristotle states that of things which are actual, some are "as motion to potentiality", others as "*ousia* to some matter".<sup>31</sup>

Now we have reached a point which requires caution. I have argued that Aristotle conceived reality as activity. However, this does not mean that all beings are activity in the same sense. Divine being as *energeia* is not identical with anything else, thus other beings are not divine and do not yearn to be a part of God but to be what they are. Beings imitate divinity through realising their nature. Therefore *imitatio dei* does not mean to strive to be a part of God but to be one's self. In other words, beings do not yearn to be God but to emulate God, what is totally active is what it is to be forever.

Aristotle speaks of the being the nature of which is *energeia* in *Metaphysics* at 1071b, 20. I believe that this has more than metaphysical force in Aristotle's whole thought. It enables us to differentiate what it is to be absolute activity from what it is to yearn to be activity. Things can only partake of divinity in accordance with their nature. As human beings, we can realise the divine element in us through our noetic activities which are not of a *kinetic* nature. Although we are composite beings and *kinetic* activities are part of our reality, nevertheless we are not defined in terms of *kinetic* activities but in terms of our active noetic activities. Being so, they are not destined to be destroyed but to be enriched and preserved. Such kinds of activities have

no limit and no end outside themselves. It is precisely this nature of noetic activities that frees us from the slavery of motion, for motion is necessarily self-annihilating. Its nature is nothing but self-destruction. It has to cease. Only divine-like activities save motion from the vanity of infinite regress. *Energeia* is the aim of *kinesis*, therefore the end of motion necessarily exists outside itself. That is why the aim of searching is to understand reality. Searching, like *kinesis*, cannot be its own aim. It cannot go on for ever. Desire to know is satisfied when one comes into contact with reality which is non-discursive. Understanding as non-discursive noetic activity has no end beyond itself and it certainly saves searching from being self-destructive.

## 7. On Perception as *Energeia* and the Sense Object

Aristotle tries to explain changeable realities by investigating their activities which are conceived to be essential for understanding what they are. Among them, perception is of particular importance from the point of Aristotle's theory of knowledge.

Aristotle characterizes sensation as a movement (De Anima, 416 b 33-34, 415 b 24-25; 410 b 25-26; De Generatione et Corruptione 324 b 25-32). He distinguishes three aspects of sensation which are:

- 1) the faculty of sensation
- 2) sensation
- 3) the object of sensation

A movement takes place between the faculty of sensation and the object of sensation. There are two sides in every movement which are

- a) the cause of affection (*paschein*)
- b) the thing which is being affected.

However, there is only one single activity during the actual sensation. For example,

the activity of one who hears and the activity of a resounding object in arousing one's hearing is a single activity. (De Anima III.2, 425 b 26 – 426 a 26). But where the movement takes place one pole is only potentially what the other one is in actuality. There is, however, distinction between them in actuality so long as movement is completed. During the movement one pole gains that which the other already has. It undergoes the effect which proceeds from the other. (De Generatione et Corruptione I 7 – here Aristotle describes the general theory of movement and alteration.)

Now it is important to consider how the two sides of movement as distinguished by Aristotle are divided between the faculty of sensation and the object. The object of sensation is the cause of sensation. In virtue of the object of sensation the existing potentiality of having sensation is actualized. The percipient's role in sensation is passive. For the percipient undergoes the action proceeding from the object. However, during the actual sensation there is only one single activity though the distinction between sensation and its object remains. For in Aristotle as in the case of thinking, perceiving is identified with that which is perceived.

That is why it does not seem to be wrong to say that *energeia* is always active in the light of what has been said. However, it is also true that movement is caused by the sense-object. The sense-object is the cause of sensation. That is why even the intellect cannot be said completely active in relation to the object of thought. For the object of thought is essential to bring the intellect into actuality in the first place and then the intellect can think itself.



8. The Distribution of the term *Energeia* / *Entelecheia* in Aristotle's Works<sup>32</sup>

Table 1: Distribution According to Treatise

Treatise		<i>Energeia</i>	<i>Entelecheia</i>
Protrepticus		5	0
De Poetis		2	0
Divisiones		1	0
Categories		0	0
Peri Hermeneias		9	0
Prior Analytics		2	0
Posterior Analytics		1	0
Topics		16	0
De Sophisticis Elenchis		0	0
Physics	I	1	1
	II	5	1
	III	32	15
	IV	9	2
	V	3	0
	VI	0	0
	VII	4	0
	VIII	12	7
	Total	66	26
De Caelo	I	7	1
	II	1	0
	III	3	0
	IV	1	2
	Total	12	4
De Generatione et Corruptione	I	3	16
	II	1	2
	Total	4	18
Meteorologies		0	1
De Anima	I	0	1
	II	27	22
	III	31	6
	Total	58	29

Treatise		<i>Energeia</i>	<i>Entelecheia</i>
De Sensu et Sensibili		20	0
De Memoria et Reminiscentia		6	0
De Somno et Vigilis		6	0
De Divinatione per Somnum		0	0
De Longitudine et Breuitate Vitae		1	0
De Iuuentute et Senectute, de Vita et Morte		2	0
De Respiratione		1	0
History of Animals		1	0
Parts of Animals		12	1
Motion of Animals		6	0
De Incessu Animalium		0	0
De Generatione Animalium	I	3	0
	II	19	2
	III	0	0
	IV	4	0
	V	0	0
	Total	26	2
Metaphysics	A	0	0
	α	0	0
	β	1	1
	Γ	0	0
	Δ	12	6
	E	1	0
	Z	0	8
	H	18	2
	θ	60	6
	I	0	0
	K	23	10
	Λ	32	2
	M	2	2
	N	5	0
	Total	154	36
Nicomachean Ethics	I	19	0
	II	5	0
	III	2	0
	IV	0	0
	V	1	0
	VI	1	0
	VII	11	0
	VIII	3	0
	IX	13	0
	X	58	0
Treatise	Total	113	0

Eudemian Ethics	I	0	0
	II	14	0
	III	0	0
	VII	7	0
Total		21	0
Politics		2	0
Constitution of Athens		0	0
Rhetoric		12	0
Poetics		1	0



**Table 2: Distribution According to Page**

(Post H)	21	22	23							
(Pr. An.)	67									
(Post. An.)	86	186								
(Top.)	105	106	117	124	125	146	154			
(Phys.) 193	200	201	202	204	206	191	195	201	202	
	204	206	207	208	211	212	213	251	257	213
	217	223	224	225	228	244	247	248	255	257
	258	263	283	260	262					
(Cael.) 281	282	283	286	302	307	311	316	317	320	
	322	326	334							
(G. & C.)	318	327	334	381	402	412	413			
(Meteor.)	(391-401 De Mundo)									
(An.)	412	415	417	418	419	422	415	416	417	418
	419	420	422	423	425	426	427	428	429	431
	429	430	431	433						
(Sens.) 438	439	441	445	446	447	448	449			
(Mem.)	450	452								
(Somno)	454	455	458							
(Somniis)	459	461								
(Long.)	465	468								
(Resp.) 479										
(H.A.) 503										
(P.A.)	642	647	649	656	667	668	682			
(M.A.) 698	701	734	702	717	726	730	734	735	736	
	737	739	740	741	742	743	744	768	769	
	(791-980 spurious works)									
(Metaph.)	996	1009	1015	1017	1019	1014	1020	1021	1022	
1023										
	1026	1034	1036	1038	1039	1044	1045	1047	1042	
1043										
	1045	1046	1047	1050	1065	1066	1071	1048	1049	
1050										
	1051	1060	1063	1065	1066	1069	1071	1074	1078	
1084										
	1072	1087	1088	1089	1092					
(N.E.) 1094	1096	1098	1099	1100	1101	1103	1105	1113	1114	
	1120	1144	1147	1152	1153	1154	1157	1168	1169	
1170										
	1171	1172	1173	1174	1175	1176	1177	1178	1179	
1180										
	(1181-1213 Magna Moralia)									
(E.E.)	1218	1219	1220	1228	1237	1238	1241	1242		
	(1249-1251 De Virtutibus et Vitiis)									
(Pol.)	1328	1332								
	(1343-1353 Oeconomica)									
(Rhet.) 1361	1378	1410	1411	1412						
	(1420-1447 Rhetorica ad Alexandrum)									
(Poet.) 1448										

## Notes to Chapter I

- 1... Rist, J.M., *The Mind of Aristotle*, 1989: 104; Blair, A.B., 'The Meaning of *Energeia* and *Entelecheia* in Aristotle', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 1967: 7.
- 2... Ross, W.D. (ed), *The Works of Aristotle Translated into English*, 1908-1952. *Energeia* is translated as 'actuality' in the *Metaphysics* and 'activity' in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The instances of *entelecheia* as 'fulfilment' is to be found in the *Physics* and 'complete reality' in *Metaphysics*.
- 3... There are three works which deserve to be mentioned and which give an extensive account of the terms *energeia* and *entelecheia*: (i) Stallmach, J., *Dynamis and Energeia: Untersuchungen am Werk des Aristoteles zur Problemgeschichte von Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit* (Meigenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1959: 2; (ii) Chen, C.H., '"Ousia" and "Energeia": two fundamental concepts in the philosophy of Aristotle', 1958; (iii) by the same author, see also 'Different Meanings of the Term "energeia" in the Philosophy of Aristotle', *Philological and Phenomenological Research*, 17, 1956-57: 56; (iv) Beyaz-Erkizan, H.N., 'Energeia: The Key Concept to Aristotle's Understanding of Reality', unpublished M.Phil. thesis, University of Essex, Colchester, 1992.
- 4... Blair, A.G., 1967: 104.
- 5... *Metaphysics*, 12, 1048a, 30-35.
- 6... *Metaphysics*, 1949b, 25; *De Generatione Animalium*, II.1, 734b-21.
- 7... *De Anima*, 412a, 16.
- 8... 201a, 9.
- 9... *De Anima* 11, 3, 414a, 32; *Metaphysics* 5, 1021a, 15-16; *De Anima*, 2, 417b, 2-4; 917, 62-4; 418a, 3-4; 429a, 23, 417b, 2-7.
- 10... *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1, 7, 1098a, 15 and 65; 10, 7, 7-22.
- 11... *Metaphysics*, 12, 7-9.
- 12... Owens, J., *Aristotle: Motion as Actuality of the Imperfect*, *Paideia* (special Aristotle issue), 120-132; (1978) Polansky, R., 'Energeia in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*', *Ancient Philosophy*, vol.3, 1983: 165-170; also see Potts, T.C., 'States, activities and performances', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplement*, vol.39, 1965: 65-84; *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10.2.1173a, 31-64 and 3, 117a, 19-29, 14-16; Kosman makes a strong interconnection between the conception of activity and perfection. What he defends is almost equal to saying that the term *energeia* in the sense of activity provides an interpretation of the individual human life from the ethical point of view - see his article: Kosman, A., 'Aristotle's Definition of Motion', *Phronesis*, vol.14, 1969, 60-62.
- 13... See for example Chapter V. I discuss there that the human noetic activity as *energeia* appears to differ from the divine noetic activity which is also said to be *energeia*.
- 14... Unless indicated otherwise, all quotations are from Loeb. Ross, W.D., *Ethica Nicomachea*, Oxford University Press, 1925.
- 15... Although a motion is thought to be an *energeia* of a sort, yet it is incomplete). See *Physics*. 201b 31-33; *Metaphysics* 1048b 28-30; *De Anima* 417a 16-17; 431a 6-7.
- 16... Again, this is related to being incomplete and complete. See 431a 5; 431a 7; 1154b 26-27.
- 17... See *Metaphysics*, 1017a, 35-69; 1045b, 29-1046a 2; 1047a, 30-62; 1050a, 21-23; *Physics*, 201a, 9-6, 15, 412a, 19-26; Blair, 1967: 110.
- 18... Sorabji, R., *Time, Creation, Continuum* (Duckworth, 1983), 148-149.
- 19... Rorty, A.O., 'The place of contemplation in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, in Rorty, A.O. (ed), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University



of California Press, 1980), 377-394.

20... See the complete bibliography on the terms *energeia* and *kinesis* in general. However, these articles are particularly on the tense logic of *energeia* and *kinesis*: (1) Cobb, A., 'The present progressive periphrasis and the metaphysics of Aristotle', *Phronesis* (1973), 18, 80-90; (2) Penner, T., 'Verbs and the identity of actions: a philosophical exercise in the interpretation of Aristotle', in Wood, O.P. and Pitcher, G. (eds), *A Collection of Critical Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1971); (3) Owens, J., 'Aristotle - motion as actuality of the imperfect', *Paedeia* (special Aristotle issue) (1978), 120-132; (4) Peck, A.L., 'Aristotle on *Kinesis*', in Anton, J. and Kustas, G. (eds), *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy* (Albany, New York, 1971).

21... 1048b 20-35, translation by Tredennick, Loeb.

22... 1050a 23ff.

23... *Metaphysics*, 1071b, 12-14; 1072, 18-20; 1072a, 25-27; 1074b, 33-35; particularly see 1050a, 23ff and 1050b, 3 where Aristotle says that *ousia* or *eidos* is *energeia*.

24... 1051b, 24-33 (*thigein*, *thinganein*); *Theaetetus*, 190c, 6 (*ephaptestha*, grasping); see also the article by Rosen, S.H., 'Thought and touch: a note on Aristotle's *De Anima*', *Phronesis* (1961), 6, 127-37.

25... *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1174a, 13.

26... 1047, 32 and 966a, 10ff.

27... *Metaphysics*, 996a, 10.

28... 1047a, 33ff.

29... 1047a, 33; see for example the discussion between Theaetetus and the Stranger at Sophist, 245a.

30... See *Physics* 265a, 33ff and *De Caela* 27gff, also compare *Generatione et Corruptione*, 336b, 25ff.

31... *Metaphysics*, 1048b, 8.

32... Blair, G.A., *Energeia and Entelecheia in Aristotle* (Fordham University, 1964), 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.



Only *nous* stands above the flux. (Stephen R.L. Clark)

The activity (*energeia*) of the intellect (*nous*) is life, and God is that activity (*energeia*). (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1072b 26-27)

The activity (*energeia*) of intellect (*nous*) has its end in itself and its own intrinsic pleasure is self sufficient, leisured. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177, 19-25)

It is the activity of the intellect (*nous*) that constitutes complete (*teleia*) human happiness. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177b 19-26)

It is foolish not to recognise what one should seek to demonstrate and what not. There cannot be demonstration of everything alike: the process would go on to infinity, so that there would still be no demonstration. (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1006a 6)

It must be the case that we are capable of knowing at least one proposition to be true, *without* knowing any other proposition whatever from which it follows. (G.E. Moore)

There need not be, are not, and *could* not be, any ultimate *archai* of definition, explanation and demonstration. (R. Bambrough)

## II ON THE CONCEPT OF *NOUS* IN ARISTOTLE

I have argued in the previous chapter that Aristotle describes reality in terms of *energeia* and the term *energeia* has many different applications in Aristotle. Now it is time to take a close look at the concept of *nous*.

### 1. The Different Meanings of *Nous*

It has been generally thought that Aristotle's remarks on *nous* commit him to a conception of *nous* as intuition.<sup>1</sup> But what do we mean by intuition? Further, what might Aristotle have meant by *nous*?

Richard Rorty speaks of the four senses of intuition. It appears that the closest to the general view of *nous* in Aristotle is:

knowledge of the truth of a proposition, but not preceded by inference<sup>2</sup>

Concerning 'intuition' as a translation of *Anschauung* in the first Critique, Ewing writes:

'Anschauung' has no connection with the sense in which this word is most commonly employed in English today as meaning *a priori* insight not based on reasoning ...<sup>3</sup>

In the light of these remarks on intuition how do we construe *nous* in Aristotle?

It seems that there are essentially two types of understanding:

I Realising the truth of some proposition. For example, "the same thing cannot at one and the same time and in the same respect both be and not be" (*Metaphysics*, 1005b, 5-34; 1011b, 13-14). In this case *nous* will be intuitive and *noesis* will be an act of intuition.

II A faculty which produces knowledge of things in an *a priori* and non-empirical manner. If this is so it is hard to think that Aristotle in many of his writings speaks of *nous* in either of the ways we have just described. The main difference between two

types of intuition is that the former does not omit the reference to empirical reality. However, the second type of intuition assumes no role of perception in producing knowledge. Perhaps this type of intuition has nothing to do with sensible things, such that its objects are of some different nature than sensible reality.

If Aristotle had thought that one could gain knowledge by the faculty of intuition, he would not have felt the need to write the *Analytics* let alone his other logical works, because he states that there are two thinking states which produce knowledge; *episteme* and *nous*. All *episteme* is discursive, namely, based on reasoning whereas *nous* is the source of all knowledge, the *arche* of the *archai*. But this does not mean that Aristotle did not consider knowledge by intuition no more than a myth.<sup>4</sup> As Kahn says, the:

... process of learning and exercising science ... must be achieved in our own experience by ordinary process of induction and hard work: there is no epistemic button we can push in order to tune in on the infallible contemplation of noetic forms by the active intellect.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore I believe that it is useless to deal with the term *nous*, particularly in the *Analytics*, in terms of intuition. To do so just leads one astray; for Aristotle perceived the function and the nature of *nous* in a completely different way. And this is what I hope to disclose throughout this study.

## **2. On the Origin of the term *Nous***

The origins of the term *nous* have been subject to a great deal of examination. Frame even wrote a doctoral thesis on the origins of the Greek word *nous*.<sup>6</sup>

There are innumerable competing views of the origin of the term *nous*. According to Von Fritz the term *nous* is derived from an original stem `snu' which means `to smell' or `sniff'. Referring back to the root `snu' thus he comes to defend the view that the term *nous* conveys a perceptual orientation from the outset.<sup>7</sup>



Some others derive it from *neein* meaning 'to swim' and *neuein* meaning 'to nod'. But Frame argues against this by claiming that *nous* is to be linked with *neomai* and *nostos* which mean to return or the return. According to him the term *nous* is derived ultimately from the Indo-European stem *nes* which conveys the meaning of a return from death and darkness. Thus he comes to assert that *nous* is connected with the conception of the return to conscious life. However, by the time of Homer *nous* and *neomai* were used divergently. As a result *nous* came to mean simply 'consciousness' or 'mind'. But *neomai* lost its religious connotations and came to mean 'return'. Frei also makes the *nous* and *neomai* connection on a different basis. He grounds his view on the appearance of the stem *neo* which is discovered on Pylos tablets and the traces of the original sense of *nous* in the *Iliad*.<sup>8</sup>

Von Fritz discusses *nous* in reference to *noein* meaning 'to see' or 'to realise'. Thus he finds in Homer the basic meaning of *nous* which is a realisation through perception.<sup>9</sup>

Von Fritz treats the development of the meaning of *nous* as temporal and logical. It is also true that in Homer the term *nous* is used to signify the realisation of a situation of great emotional impact and importance. It is through this sense that *nous* also came to mean 'order' or 'ordering'.<sup>10</sup>

The developmental account of *nous* is rejected by Boehme. According to him *nous* always refers to something purely intellectual (*rein intellektuell*). So he rejects the view that *noein* is to ever be related to any realisation through any sort of perception. However, the view particularly defended by Von Fritz appears to be right. But nevertheless to confine the meaning of *nous* to 'realisation through perception' cannot be right. For even in Homer *nous* has different senses which are also present in the writings of the classical period.<sup>11</sup>

It is almost impossible to deny the continued and close relation between *nous* and perception. Although the philosophical use of the term *nous* could signify reasoning and inference but not relate it to perception, this only proves the divergent uses of the term *nous*.<sup>12</sup> But in essence it emerges in the writings of pre-Socratic philosophers that *nous* is understood as being in close cooperation with perception and functioning through it. *Nous* and perception did not oppose each other, in their views.<sup>13</sup> For example, the apposition of seeing and hearing *nous* in *Xenophanes* (Fragment B24). The same is also present in non-philosophical literature. In *Oedipus Rex*, for example, Oedipus' curse of Teiresias is to be blinded in ear, *nous*, eye, everything. Teiresias says that what Oedipus uttered will keep haunting him since, being a man, Oedipus does not realise the significance of the situation, therefore he is blind in *nous*.<sup>14</sup>

It is also possible to infer that this sense of *nous* is related to the other senses of *nous*. In that case, *nous* could denote a sign of a person's wisdom or intelligence. It is suggested by Burnet that a person who has practical wisdom (*phronesis*) can also be thought to possess *nous* because a person who sees what is right and acts accordingly is also the one who is said to have *nous*.<sup>15</sup>

What this little survey has shown us is that it is impossible to use *nous* or *noein* in isolation from sensible contexts. Historically these two terms have always come to refer to apprehension of things which are perceptible and realisation through perception.

### 3. On the Meaning of *Nous* in Plato

First I would like to say that it would be wrong to think that *nous* has precisely the same meaning in Aristotle as in Plato. The term *nous* has had a long history of use in Greek literature and philosophical writings. So it would be natural to think that Aristotle used the term to suit his philosophical position. But nevertheless one needs to



be familiar with its previous uses in order to see how Aristotle has come to understand and use the term *nous* in his writings. Therefore I will briefly give an account of *nous* in Plato in order to detect the similarity and dissimilarity between Platonic and Aristotelian uses of the term *nous*.

Let us begin with book VI of the *Republic*. Here *nous* and perception are almost conceived as opposed to each other. A sharp distinction between *nous* and perception is indicated. In spite of being conceived as analogous in some respects, *nous* and perception are nevertheless said to have different objects. The objects of *nous* correspond to *nous* as the objects of sight do to the faculty of sight (508a, 1).

The reason for driving a wedge between perception and *nous* is to prove that things in the world of flux are not perceived by thought. And Plato states that the form of things constitutes the object of thought.<sup>16</sup>

However, Plato goes much deeper and he firstly comes to understand *nous* as having nothing to do with any information that senses provide. He promotes dialectic as proximate form of the exercise of *nous*. As such it signifies the highest level of knowledge (511b-e). In the *Republic* at line 511c 1-2, we are also told that in this sort of activity no information provided by senses is required. There is only activity of pure ideas which move through ideas to ideas and end with ideas.<sup>17</sup>

As we have just indicated though, Plato himself drives a wedge between *nous* and perception; it is nevertheless possible to infer that the term *nous* has more than a single meaning in his writings. In order to prove this fact we could turn to *noein*. In general it is right to say that *noein* is contrasted with verbs of perception, for example *horan*. But Plato appears to use *noein* to mean perceptual realisation. The example for the use of *noein* in this sense comes from *Phaedrus* 229c 4 and *Timaeus* 37c 6. In the former *Phaedrus* speaks of the altar to Boreas by the side of the stream that he did not notice previously. In the case of *Timaeus* at 37c 6, the father and creator realises that what he had made was alive and moving. It is also possible to find the use of *noein* in



relation to perceptual cases. Instances of the uses of *nous* in perceptual contexts are also to be found in *Philebus* (24a) and *Laws* (738a 1, 952b 9). Here, though, one could say that Plato is writing colloquially. The contrast of *horan* and *noein*, which is present in the *Republic*, is also absent in the *Parmenides* "that which appears to be one thing when seen from a distance and dimly will (*horon ti*) turn out to be unlimited in number when seen close at hand and keen vision (*nounti*)".<sup>18</sup>

Parmenides suggests to Socrates that he got his notion of forms in the following way:

When it seems to you that a number of things are large, there seems I suppose, to be a single character which is the same when you look at all of them; hence you think that largeness a single thing ... some one thing which thought observes to cover the cases, as being a single character.<sup>19</sup>

It is obvious that the account of *noein* in the *Republic* which is confined to Forms and relations among Forms is radically different than the account of it in the *Parmenides*. Thus, as far as the account of *noein* is concerned it is hard to claim that Plato uses it in a single sense. But could the same be said of *nous*?

In fact it seems that although *noein* exhibits different meanings in Plato's writings the same thing is not true of *nous*. In the *Philebus* *nous* is described as the purest, most exact and truest kind of knowledge. For it does not deal with things which are in constant flux but its objects are true beings, which are changeless, eternal and the most precious.<sup>20</sup>

Thus *noein* has a range of different uses in Plato. It could signify a perfect intellectual activity as well as the realisation of something in relation to perception. The latter meaning is also to be found from Homer onwards. And this meaning is commonly found in pre-Aristotelian writings. In the light of this survey one should not expect to find a single meaning of the term *nous* in Aristotle. Therefore it would also be misleading to restrict Aristotle's use of *nous* to the one of its previous meanings. But

nevertheless it appears to be possible to speak of a particularly Platonic conception of *nous*, since it is closely related to a special conception of dialectic and a dualistic metaphysics. However, Aristotle did not follow Plato with regard to dialectic and metaphysics. So there should be no reason to think that the Aristotelian conception of *nous* is necessarily Platonic.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. The Different Meanings of *Nous* in Aristotle

I am convinced that elucidation of the terms *nous*, *energeia*, *entelechia* and *theoria* are crucial to understanding what Aristotle says in *De Anima*, *Metaphysics* and *Ethics*. For these terms are employed in those works with different meanings. There are the different applications of each term mentioned above (see for example Chapter I on the term *energeia*). Thus, in order to eliminate confusions one is bound to elucidate each application in the context that they are used. Moreover, since the aim of this project is primarily to discuss human thinking and divine thinking in relation to discursive thinking and non discursive thinking, the clarification of the terms *nous*, *energeia*, *entelechia* and *theoria* is fundamental to the present subject-matter too.

But first is *nous*. The last chapter of *Posterior Analytics* is one of the most important in all Aristotle's works. It conveys Aristotle's views on sense and *nous*. After describing the various processes of acquiring knowledge he comes to the conclusion that there must be *archai* of knowledge which are *anapodeicta*, not subject to demonstration. According to Aristotle without these *archai* knowledge is impossible. Without them there would be either an infinite regress or a vicious circle which would make knowledge impossible. He concludes that not all knowledge is by demonstration. Therefore in the case of the *archai* of knowledge one should not ask for further demonstration. They are self-evident and *anapodeicta*.<sup>22</sup>

If the *archai* are not based on prior knowledge how do we know them? What is the source from which we derive them? Aristotle does not believe that knowledge is innate in us in a determinate form. Although knowledge originates from sensation the ultimate source of it is *nous*. The argument Aristotle produces is the following: there are *episteme* and *nous* which produce knowledge. All *episteme* is discursive (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140b 33) in which first principles must be known before the conclusion. *Nous* is like a hand with which one does something else; without *nous* there is no knowledge at all. *Nous* infallibly gives truth; *nous* only is the source of all knowledge, the *archai* of the *archai*.

Aristotle's description of *nous* in *Posterior Analytics* is an answer to both Scepticism and Platonism. *Nous* as such is the principle of certainty against Scepticism and Platonic dogmatism. But it is not without difficulties.

Aristotle's views on the *archai* are open to many objections. First of all he appears to seek for certainty and demands *necessary truths*. According to him philosophic and scientific knowledge can only be built on valid reasoning from first premises which are beyond any doubt and are necessary. Today, however, the scientist thinks that science is composed of tentative hypotheses and subject to continuous revision. It is also thought that there is no need to seek for principles which are themselves beyond argument. So there is no knowledge to be gained through intuition. In simple terms, knowledge by intuition is a myth.<sup>23</sup>

There is an account of knowledge given in the *Phaedo* which is based on the assumption that we acquire knowledge through sensation even though it is rejected by Socrates at the end. The important point here is that recognition of the forms is realised by perception (74b). The activity of this recognition is *dianoia* which is ranked below *nous*. But it is the *nous* that grasps the *arche* and sees the forms. The eyes of *nous* are



turned above. Once the philosopher has grasped the *arche* of all things he/she could start the reasoning process from the ultimate premises.

Aristotle is dissatisfied with such a transcendent form of goodness.<sup>24</sup> For Aristotle *nous* is conceived to think the forms which were immanent. But nevertheless *nous* for both Plato and Aristotle remained as something divine. *Nous* never appears to be a purely human faculty in Aristotle. He seems to consider it as a link between the human being and divinity, for only God is considered to be pure *nous*.<sup>25</sup> It is right to infer from what has been said earlier that in *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle perceives *nous* as the principle of knowledge, without which *epagoge*, demonstration and deduction are impossible. However, *nous* has a wider sense which denotes all the operations of reason.<sup>26</sup>

When one turns to the *Politics*, one witnesses other meanings of *nous*. Aristotle divides *psyche* into two parts and identifies the rational part with *nous*. (1334b 17-20). *Nous* as it is used in *Politics* cannot denote something infallible as in *Analytics* where *nous* is said to be always right. The latter meaning of *nous* is also found in *De Anima* 433a 26 and 428a 17-18. However we also find Aristotle saying at 427b 8-9 that *nous* consists of all sorts of judgements.

To deal with all the applications meanings of *nous* in Aristotle is a big enough task to constitute a work of its own. My aim here, however, is just to point out how Aristotle employs the term *nous* in different contexts. Why it is important to remember this is that one should not expect a single meaning of *nous* in Aristotle will be clear when I discuss the divine and individual noetic activity in Chapter V. A way to gain insight into the different applications of *nous* lies, I believe, in returning to *Metaphysics* where Aristotle discloses the perfect use of the term *nous* in relation to the discussion of the nature of God.<sup>27</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

The term 'intuition' does not convey the single meaning of *nous* in Aristotle. It is unacceptable to presume there is a single meaning of *nous* in the writings of Aristotle, let alone to confine its meaning merely to intuition or to claim that only intuition enables us to be in contact with the perpetually recurring, eternal principles, forms, since this is what intuition does.<sup>28</sup>

The conception of *nous* as intuition in Aristotle is based on the interpretation of *nous* in *Posterior Analytics*. It is also assumed that its use can be understood in the light of other uses of the term elsewhere in Aristotle's writings, and in the writings of other philosophers. But it is obvious that the *nous* of *Posterior Analytics* is not identical with the *nous* of *De Anima* nor is it the *nous* of *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*. In fact, Aristotle's use of *nous* differs in his ethical, psychological and scientific writings. And I believe that *Metaphysics* has a special place amongst other works of Aristotle; here for the first time he fully discusses the nature of God as being *nous*.<sup>29</sup>

I also believe that the other uses of *nous* in Aristotle can be understood in the light of *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9. In my view Aristotle tells us here of the perfect meaning of *nous* (this will be clear when I discuss *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9 in Chapter V). So it is not right to think that there is only a single meaning of the term *nous* in Aristotle. For example, in *Analytics* we are faced with a special sort of difficulty, for the *nous* is for the first time understood as a state (*hexis*) of psyche which seems to be contrasted with *episteme* and this is clearly different from the conception of *nous* in *De Anima* where Aristotle says that it is the part of the soul.<sup>30</sup>

Now we are also forced to speak of the Platonic conception of *nous* and its relation (if there is any) to Aristotelian conception of *nous*, since there are some who simply reject the idea of a unique use of the word *nous* by Aristotle; for example Jaeger



regards it as a holdover from Plato<sup>31</sup> and Le Blond also claims that *nous* is of knowledge that cannot be reconciled with an empiricist epistemology. He says that "depuis Anaxagore, le nous était considéré comme essentiellement actif, impassible". Thus he write that since *nous* has "une saveur Platonicienne" it is almost impossible to relate *nous* to my perceptual experience except by "un veritable saut qui demeure injustifié ..."<sup>32</sup>

But this assumption is not justifiable. It will become clear in the following chapters that Aristotle employs the term *nous* in different contexts. This is also true of terms like *ousia*, *eidos* and *sullogismos*. Although it is possible to find a similarity between them,<sup>33</sup> this does not mean that there are no important differences. If it is possible to speak of a non-Platonic conception of *ousia* in Aristotle then, it is equally possible to think that the Aristotelian conception of *nous* is not Platonic. That is why I am inclined to think it is perfectly possible for Aristotle to have a non-Platonic conception of *nous* as he does of *ousia*, *sullogismos* and *eidos*. This is also true for Anaxagoras and for any of Aristotle's predecessors who employed the term *nous*. But this does not preclude him from choosing to employ the term to suit his philosophical needs. For it is Aristotle's habit to employ a term in a distinctive manner that serves his aims. He also goes further, and if there is not a convenient term to explain his thought, Aristotle does not hesitate to invent one as in the case of *energeia* and *entelecheia*. Although he is aware of the past use of a word he does not appear to be beholden to it in essence.

But one also should be mindful of the previous uses of *nous*. This is absolutely vital for understanding Aristotle, for it would be unlikely for Aristotle's use of a term to be totally artificial. Therefore the history of the term *nous* needs to be investigated in order to keep in perspective its different meanings and the contexts in which the term is



used. But it would be wrong to presume from the beginning that there is a single meaning of the term *nous* in *Posterior Analytics*, *Metaphysics*, *Ethics*, let alone in *De Anima*.

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## Notes to Chapter II

- 1.. See for example Kal, V., *On Intuition and Discursive Reasoning in Aristotle* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 44.
- 2.. *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edwards, P., New York, 1967, vol IV, pp204-212.
- 3.. Ewing, A.C., *A Short Commentary on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, London, 1938, p17.
- 4.. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1140b 33, see also 1140b 31-41, a 8.
- 5.. Kahn, C., 'The role of *nous* in the cognition of First Principles in *Posterior Analytics* II.9'. In: *Aristotle on Science: the Posterior Analytics, Proceedings of the Eighth Symposium Aristotelicum Padoua*, ex. E. Bent, Padua.
- 6.. Frame, D.G., Harvard University, April, 1971.
- 7.. Von Fritz, 'Nous and Noein in the Homeric Poem', *Classical Philology*, 38, pp79-93, 1943; Schwyzer also agrees with Von Fritz on the root of the term *nous*. Leshner appears to share their views. On these points see: Leshner, James, 'The Meaning of Nous in the *Posterior Analytics*' *Phronesis*, p47 and note 2, (1973).
- 8.. The argument against Schwyzer's view on the origins of the term *nous* is to be found in: Frame, D.G., 'The Origins of Greek Nous', doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, April, 1971. For those who know German: Schwyzer, *Beitrage zur griechischen Wortforschung*, in *Festschrift Paul Kretschmer*, pp244-251, New York, 1962; Kieckers and Prellwitz. Of the Kieckers view see also: *Etymologisches Worterbuch der griechischen Sprache*, pxii, 315, Gottigen, 105. Again discussions of these etymologies are given in Frame's study. On the account of the origins of *nous* see Frei, P., *Zur Etymologie von griech nous*, *Lemmata W.*, Ehlers, pp48-57, Munich, 1968.
- 9.. Von Fritz, Kurt, 'Nous, Noein and their Derivations in Pre-Socratic Philosophy (excluding Anaxagoras)', *Classical Philology*, 40, p223, 1945; O'Brien, M.S., *The Socratic Paradoxes and the Greek Mind*, chapter I, Chapel Hill, 1967.
- 10.. Snell, Bruno, 'Die Ausdrücke für den Begriff des Wissens in den vorplatonischen Philosophie', *Philologische Untersuchungen*, XXIX, 1924.
- 11.. See: Boehme, *Die Seele und das leh im Homerischen Epos*, Berlin, 1929; Leshner, p49 and compare the listing of the Liddell and Scott Greek-English Lexicon, 7th ed: The listings of the Liddell and Scott are the following: *nous*: 1) mind, perception, apprehension; 2) to have sense, be sensible; 3) the mind, heart; 4) one's mind, purpose; 5) the sense of a word. Even in the listing of the Liddell and Scott *noein* is not considered to have its meaning independently of *nous*. Here the meanings that *noein* could include: 1) to perceive by the eyes, observe, notice; 2) to think, suppose; 3) to think, contrive; 4) to conceive, dream of; 5) (of words) to have a certain sense, meaning.
- 12.. *Parmenides*, Fragment 7.

- 13.. Fragment B24; Empedocles, Fragment B2, B4.
- 14.. Von Fritz, NOUS, NOEIN, *Classical Philology*, 40 and 41, 1945-46.
- 15.. Burnet, J., *The Ethics of Aristotle*, 280, London, 1900.
- 16.. 507b, 9-10.
- 17.. For a description of the perfect state of knowledge as *nous* and *noesis* see: 511d 1; 511d 8.
- 18.. 165b 7, a 2 *horonti* = perception and *noounti* = keen vision. A further perceptually oriented use of *noein* is of *Parmenides* 135d 1 and *Republic* 360a 4.
- 19.. 132a-c.
- 20.. *Philebus* 58d.
- 21.. Lesher, (1973) p.15.
- 22.. To discuss *epagoge*, experience and the relation of *nous* to them is beyond the aim of this project. I would just like to point out the vital importance of *nous* in *Posterior Analytics*. The last chapter is discussed by Hamlyn, *Phronesis*, 1976, 171; of the importance of the development from sense to *nous* see also the beginning of *Metaphysics*; for a modern discussion of the question of indemonstrable knowledge see Bambrough, R., in *Reason, Trust and God*, 91ff, London, 1969; of the indemonstrable nature of an axiom see *Posterior Analytics*, 72a 14-16.
- 23.. On the point of the tentative character of science see Popper, K.R., *Open Society and its Enemies*, vol.2, London, 1945, 11, 11; for an objection to knowledge by intuition see Guthrie, W.K.C., *Aristotle: an encounter*, 170ff, Cambridge University press, Cambridge, 1981.
- 24.. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1095a 26-28.
- 25.. Guthrie says that "one sometimes longs to explain the whole of Aristotle's philosophy in a single burst, like a rocket from which all the coloured stars flash out together. It has an essential unity. Unfortunately it is impracticable to deal simultaneously with physics, ontology, psychology, theology, cosmology and ethics, so we must be content with frequent reminders of their shared foundations". Guthrie, W.K.C., *Aristotle, an encounter*, 196 n.1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981. In a sense I feel quite fortunate that the aim of this project is just to deal with the link - *nous* - between the human being and divinity.
- 26.. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1143a 25.
- 27.. Of the different meanings of *nous* see: Brentano, F., *Psychology of Aristotle*, 2-3 (ed and trans. George, R.), Berkeley, 1975. Allan also speaks of the essential and non essential meanings of *nous* in his *Philosophy of Aristotle*, 69, Oxford, 1952; and also see Guthrie, W.K.C., *Aristotle: an encounter*, p286, 308-9, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981.
- 28.. Kal, V., *On Intuition and Discursive Reasoning in Aristotle*, 60, Leiden, 1988.
- 29.. *Metaphysics* XII, 7-9.
- 30.. *Nous* includes all the operations of reason at *De Anima* 429a 23 and *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1143a 25. Psyche has two parts which are rational and irrational - see *Politics* 1334b 17-20. There Aristotle also identifies rational part with *nous*. A little further it is equated with *logismos*: 1334b 17-24. Aristotle also speaks of practical and theoretical *nous*, see 433a 14-18. The other important point is that *nous* cannot be said to be infallible in essence. But nevertheless in the *Analytics* it is said to be always right. On this see also the *De Anima* 433a 26, and 429a 11-8. It is possible to find a more complete list of the different meanings of *nous* in Brentano's *Psychology of Aristotle*, 2-3. Allan also speaks of the wider and narrower senses of the term *nous* in Aristotle, see Allan D.J., *Philosophy of Aristotle*, 69, Oxford, 1952. Lesher also provides somewhat full references to the different meanings and its uses by Aristotle see Lesher, J., 'The

Meaning of Nous in the Posterior Analytics', p46, *Phronesis* 18, 1973, 44-68. It is also important to consult Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus*, Berlin, 1970 pp490b 45-49l 634.

31.. Jaeger, W., *Aristotle*, trans. Robinson, R., 2nd ed., Oxford, 1948, 204-5.

32.. Le Blond, J.M., *Logique et Méthode chez Aristotle*, pp131 and 138, Paris, 1939.

33.. *Theaetetus*, 202d 7; *Posterior Analytics*, 100b 10.



### III. THE CONCEPT OF *NOUS* IN *DE ANIMA*

I have argued so far that the elucidation of certain terms, namely *energeia* / *entelecheia*, *nous* and *theoria* are indispensable to the subject of thinking in Aristotle. I have already shown that the terms *energeia* / *entelecheia* and *nous* have several different uses in Aristotle's writings. However, the conception of *nous* in *De Anima* has been considered particularly difficult, which is why I will discuss *De Anima* III.4 and 5 in some detail here.

#### 1. **Introductory Remarks: the Concept of *Nous* in *De Anima* III.4 and 5**

Wilkes concludes her article under the title of 'Final Embarrassed Postscript' by saying:

What to do with *De Anima* 3.5? Here Aristotle - whom I have acclaimed so far as every physicalist's ideal role-model - seems to put himself very resoundingly in the dualist camp. I cannot understand this chapter, and none of the secondary literature has so far helped me to do so. Thus I will end this paper with one or two comments which may help to mitigate the difficulty; *all the same I have to say that I wish he had never written this chapter.*<sup>1</sup>

At 430a 25 we get the reading "without *nous poietikos* the passive intellect does not think". It is obvious that one cannot discuss what Aristotle says in *De Anima* III.4 in isolation. However, *De Anima* III.5 is itself full of difficulties, without reading it with *De Anima* III.4. Therefore the best strategy appears to be to examine *De Anima* III.4 and III.5 in turn.

One of the most vexing problems in Aristotle's philosophy is the meaning of *nous*. One cannot avoid perplexity without analysing *nous* and its different applications in Aristotle. That is why I have felt that it is essential to deal with the concept of *nous* in Aristotle before discussing discursive and non-discursive thinking. It is also unanimously held that *De Anima*'s account of *nous* is driven in opposite and irreconcil-

able directions, so that Aristotle's tendencies towards naturalistic and transcendentalistic accounts of *nous* surface in *De Anima* III.4 and III.5. Noetic activity as *energeia* defines the human being whose soul is the *entelecheia* of its body (412a, 16-22). It also describes the activity of a deity which has neither body nor soul, but human thought requires images yet divine *nous* thinks itself.<sup>2</sup> The concept of *nous* in Aristotle is genuinely difficult to comprehend and its elusiveness has been compounded by the failure to take account of the different meanings of *nous* as employed by Aristotle.

One of the great mistakes is, I believe, to equate Plato's concept of *noesis* with Aristotle's concept of *nous*. In Plato, *Noesis* means the intuition of the highest forms.<sup>3</sup> According to Lee,<sup>4</sup> Aristotelian *nous* is the same as Platonic *noesis* so that there is no difference whatsoever between them. So, in virtue of importing Plato's concept of *noesis* into Aristotle, many of his statements on *nous* have been glossed over, and as a result of this approach he is found to be guilty of either being puzzling or inconsistent. For example, Jaeger accepts the tension between the Platonic interpretation of *nous* and the employment of *nous* by Aristotle and concludes that Aristotle's theory of *nous* was merely carried over from an earlier Platonic period.<sup>5</sup>

Although there have been so many recent attempts to re-examine Aristotle's treatment of *nous*, many of these attempts have been confined to *Posterior Analytics* and little work has been done on Aristotle's employment of *nous* in *De Anima*, *Metaphysics* and *Ethics*.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter is therefore particularly concerned with the concept of *nous* in the context of *De Anima*, *Nicomachean Ethics* (especially book X) and *Metaphysics*, book XII, where divine thinking and being is considered.

It is generally held that Aristotle's transcendentalistic tendency is expressed in *De Anima* III.5 in the form of *nous poietikos*. There are five lines of interpretation which can be expressed as follows:



1. According to some *nous poietikos* is essentially of the individual mind and as such it secures the individual immortality.<sup>7</sup>
2. Some commentators consider *nous poietikos* in relation to the individual noetic activity but they do not think that it forms part of the individual mind.<sup>8</sup>
3. Although each interpretation has had its proponents from antiquity through the Middle Ages until the present day, the idea that Aristotle refers to the divine *nous* in *De Anima* III.5 has been almost universally discarded. However, Anscombe defends this as at least the more likely interpretation, therefore she writes:

Aquinas took 'the productive' intellect to be a concept-forming part or aspect of the human mind, but from Aristotle's brief and obscure text it seems to me more likely to be the divine mind that Aristotle intends, unless, which is possible, he thought that human minds actually had a divine part; the one thing that comes into the world, as he puts it, 'from outside'.<sup>9</sup>

Wilkes also agrees that in *De Anima* III.5 Aristotle gestures towards the divine *nous* of *Metaphysics* XII and he has no intention of seeing it as a part of an individual human mind.<sup>10</sup>

4. Some other commentators, for example During and Jaeger, come to conclude that Aristotle's account of *nous* in *De Anima* III.5 is inconsistent with general accounts and it is merely a hangover from Aristotle's early Platonistic period.<sup>11</sup>
5. Finally, some recent commentators have attempted to give a naturalistic account of *nous* in *De Anima* or they have tried to prove that the discussion of *nous* in *De Anima* III.5 is essentially irrelevant to Aristotle's account of the soul.<sup>12</sup>

I believe that none of these interpretations have captured what Aristotle really wants to say and therefore they have not been successful in understanding the account of *nous* in *De Anima* III.4 and III.5. The reason for their failure, I believe, can be put down to the following:

- a) None of these interpretations takes into account the various different uses of *nous* in the Aristotelian corpus.



b) Commentators have also neglected to include other very important terms, *energeia* and *entelecheia*, which are coined by Aristotle in his discussion of thinking, for Aristotle describes thinking in terms of *energeia* as opposed to *kinesis*.

Here I am not mainly concerned with the immortality of the human being, nor trying to justify one interpretation over others. First, I would like to provide an interpretation of *De Anima* III.4 and III.5 which would remove any obstacles on the way to understanding discursive and non-discursive thinking in Aristotle. Then, I will continue with my interpretation of Aristotle's account of *nous* in *De Anima*, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Metaphysics* XII in Chapter V. Finally, I will discuss the prominent views on Aristotle's theory of thinking in the light of my understanding of the concept of *nous* in Aristotle. By doing this, I hope to show how Aristotle's concept of *nous* provides us with a profound understanding of human noetic activity and why it might be different from divine noetic activity. However, first let us proceed with *De Anima* III.4 and then continue with *De Anima* III.5. But before doing this something needs to be said about perceiving and thinking, since Aristotle says that thinking is something different like this, (*he ti toiouton heteron*), namely perception.

## 2. Some Remarks on *De Anima* II.5

In *De Anima* III.4 Aristotle is mainly considered with the problem of sensation and thinking.

He begins drawing a parallel between sensation and thinking. We also find that Aristotle earlier drew attention to this parallel too. Sensation and thinking are similar processes. The object of knowledge affects the intelligent which comes to know. The intelligent is moved by the object of thinking, as a faculty of sensation is moved by the object of sensation. (*De Anima* II.4, 429<sup>b</sup>, a 13-14; 410 a 25-26; 429<sup>b</sup>, a 14-15; *Metaphysics* 1072 a 30)

If we follow the parallel between sensation and thinking, it is true that the intellect must receive form without matter. Prior to knowing the intellect must be potentially identical with this form. However, there is also a difference between sensation and thinking. Although the intellect is not limited about what it can know, sensation is always a particular sensation such as colour or sound. At first it appears that the analogy about sensation and thinking holds rather well. However as we have just pointed out thinking is not limited, it is able to know everything whereas sensation is determined, for the intellect is unmixed with matter. Being not materially determined, the intellect is potentially the same as with its objects. Prior to thinking, the thinking has not been activated by the object of thinking. In this respect the intellect does not appear to be joined to body like the soul. For this reason thinking seems to be different from sensation. (De Anima III.4, 429 a 15-16; 429 a 18; 429 20-24; 429 a 24-27; 429 a 29-30; 429 31-b4)

Until now what has been said about sensation and thinking appears to be easy to understand. However, when we look at *De Anima* I and II, it is not easy to conceive the relation between the soul and the intellect. Aristotle describes the intellect as to be unmixed with the body, pure potentiality and impassable. He also says that it exists independently. As described above the intellect must be different from the soul, for the soul is described as being *entelecheia* of a living body as such. (De Anima 429 a 21-22; 429 a 22-24, 429 b 5, 413 a 31-32 and b 26-28; 415 a 2-3)

In virtue of the object of knowledge the capacity of the individual to know becomes actual. The potential however becomes somebody who has knowledge. We are told in *De Anima* III.4 that even then the knower is still a potential knower. It is true that the individual knower, knows and can think of what the individual knower knows of his/her own feel, even though the object of knowledge is no longer present. the individual knower knows in the full sense of the word if the individual knower



actually contemplates something (De Anima 429 b 5-9; Physics -VIII.4, 255 a 33; Metaphysics 104 8 a 32; Prior Analytics II.21, 67 a 33-65; 1087 a 15 and further)

An example of the subject comes from *De Anima* II.5. Aristotle tells us that there are three different ways in which a person can be said to know.

1. A person who is capable of acquiring science.
2. A person who has a science of grammar.
3. A person who is actually exercising his/her knowledge.

Aristotle argues that in the first and in the second case are not in the same sense a person who potentially knows. He says that in the first case the person who knows is like matter which is in the need of to be brought to actuality by something else. However, in the second case the person can think at his/her will. In the first case one learns science for the first time. In the second case one actually thinks of something. In the first case the person moves from a state of privation to a positive state. (De Anima II.5, 417 a 21-22; 417 a 26-28)

The difference is between gaining knowledge and exercising this knowledge. *De Anima* II.5 shows that the terms potentiality and actuality (activity) have different meanings. It also explains something about sensation. The transition from the possession of knowledge to the actual thinking of it that one knows also as a model for the transition from possession of the faculty of sensation to sensation. (De Anima II.5, 412 a 21; De Sensu 4, 441b 22-23; 412 a 10-11; 412 a 22-27)

Aristotle makes distinction between two senses of *paschein* which are:

1. *Paschein* can mean the destruction of something by its opposite.
2. *Paschein* which signifies presentation.

If the possessor of science engages in thinking *paschein* as destruction is out of the question. Second sense of *paschein* as presentation that which is affected attains its proper nature. The person who already possesses science can think at his/her will and



no longer is in need of to be then taught to do this. Aristotle also explains the transition from its possession of the faculty to active sensation in the same way. (*De Anima* I.1, 412 a 10-11; a 22-27; 417 b 5-7; 417 b13; 417 b 16-19)

In *De Anima* Aristotle speaks of two kinds of change in one of which the change which results in knowledge and in the second of which the change brings about active thinking of the known object. In *De Anima* III.4 Aristotle compares thinking with sensation. He also refers to the distinction between the possession of science and the actual experience of it. One might suspect some sort of discrepancy between *De Anima* III.4 and *De Anima* II.5. However, this can be explained by noting that the transition from possession of science to actual thinking of it indicates the various degrees in which a thing can be said to be potential and actual. the model in which sensation and thinking explained how its origin in Plato (*Theaetetus*, 158 d; *Euthyd* , 277 b)

In *De Anima* II.5 Aristotle contrasts sensation with thinking by saying that the intellect thinks itself wherever it wishes whereas sensation cannot. The latter is dependent on presence of the object of sensation. However, it becomes clear that in *De Anima* III.4 that both sensation and thinking cannot occur without an object. Only acquiring science or knowledge one can proceed by oneself to think the known object. Therefore we are faced with more complex conception of sensation and thinking in *De Anima* III.4 than in *De Anima* II.5.

It is also important to bear in mind what Aristotle says in *De Anima* II.5 one can exercise one's knowledge whenever one likes, provided that external causes do not prevent him. Although Aristotle says that actual sensation corresponds to the exercise of knowledge there still remains some differences between two which are:

1. The objects of sensation which produce the actuality of sensation are external
2. Actual sensation is of particulars, whereas knowledge is of universal .

3. Universals are in a sense exist in the soul itself.
4. One can think whenever one wishes.
5. One cannot experience sensation whenever one chooses. For the presence of the objects of sensation is essential.

(De Anima II.5, 417 b 24-25; De Anima III.4, 429 b 5-9; Metaphysics; 104 8 a 34-35)

However, it is difficult to see that one can think whenever one wishes.

Aristotle says himself in *De Anima* that one is capable of exercising one's knowledge whenever he wishes if something does not present him to do so. In a sense even if it is not possible to claim that one can think whenever wishes. (De Anima II.5, 417 a 25-30)

In the model in which Aristotle explains sensation and thinking it is possible to speak of:

- a) Passive sensation and passive thinking.
- b) Active sensation and active thinking.

In the first case the movement originates from the object of knowledge which produces impressions. In the second case the knower initiated the movement. This establishes a two way relation with reality. "In one case the relation to reality is direct, in the other it is indirect." (Kal, 1988, 80) It is this relation that explains why sensation and active thinking cannot be wrong, whereas imagination and thought may be false.

In *Posterior Analytics* II.19 Aristotle speaks of a possibility of knowing without in any respect already possessing the knowledge which is to be acquired. It is also interesting to see that Aristotle does not bring the question of memory in these chapters of *De Anima* Imagination plays no role in connection with the process that leads knowing.

Only through non-discursive activity of intellect the direct relation between reality and the intellect can be established in the direct way that sensation has. Imagination and discursive thought cannot produce the universal which is the object of non-discursive



thinking. It is already present in sensible reality and already the object of sensation.

A Note:

It is true that every case of actual thinking requires prior learning for humans.

However, it is not easy to argue that the quality of the second actuality thinking does not differ from that of somebody who does not need to learn. Let us imagine two cases in which a subject knows or thinks:

1. A is not in need of learning. A already knows B. A can think whenever A wishes.
2. A is already thinking of B and its intellect is identical with B.

There is no real difference between the case of 1 and 2. For in both cases the knower has the power to initiate the act of thinking. But the important point is that in the cases of 1 and 2 the knower can realize his/her potentiality unless something external prevents him/her to do so. It is possible that in the sense of 1 A can lose his/her memory or A can lose its ability to play a piano in virtue of a physical accident. This will automatically prevent A from passing to the actual exercise of what A wishes to do. Could we still claim that there is no difference between the second actuality thinking and that of somebody who does not need to learn?

In cases of 1 and 2 the knower can do otherwise in virtue of a number of reasons. However, in the case of the knower (say God) it thinks necessarily. It is impossible to think of God that it can be prevented from thinking by something else. (See chapter 6.)

Sensation is the ability to take on sensible forms without matter. Although the faculty of sense and its organ are the same their essence is different. A hearing ear is one thing but as a thing it is a syntheton. Sensation takes place in a material organ which is formed to be capable of being affected in this way by the object sensed. The conclusion is that what is sensed in the act of sensation is form.

It is not difficult to relate what Aristotle says here to his theory of knowledge.



Although what is sensed in the act of sensation is sensible forms how could one distinguish it from intelligible forms? The difference between the two can be stated as follows:

Sensation requires material organ as mediator between sensible forms and the soul. The example comes from *Metaphysics* 1025 b 32-34 where Aristotle considers the difference between snubness and concavity. The sensible form is closely connected with matter. It is confined to special sort of matter, for instance, flesh. The sensible form is received in sensation, but to acquire the knowledge of concavity the soul must proceed further.

Although we perceive the individual, says Aristotle in *Posterior Analytics*, sense perception is of the universal. (100 a 16-61)

However, it gives the universal in a rudimentary way. The example comes from the *Analytics* and is of 'man'. In order to have knowledge we must go beyond sensation.

It seems to be difficult to distinguish sensation from thought and is less cut and dried than we might think. It is also important to note that the phrase *toiouton heteron* is very important. Although Aristotle says that thinking is analogous to perception the former is something different like this. Hence he appears to have very serious reservations about the analogy itself.

### **3. Sensation and Thought**

As opposed to *Posterior Analytics* we find little about the truth and untruth of cognition, knowledge of the particular and the universal and the separation and combination of concepts in *De Anima*.

Aristotle criticises Democritus for not making distinction between the intellect and soul. According to him Democritus conceives the intellect in the way which

excludes any possibility of reaching the truth. (De Anima, 404 a 27-31; 405 a 8-13; 404 a 30-31). Aristotle also discusses Plato's view in which thinking is conceived in relation to circular movement. These passages indicate that Aristotle is dissatisfied with the explanation of thinking in Democritus and in Plato. He asserts straightforwardly that a single contact is sufficient for knowing which is like the attaining of a state of rest then a movement. (De Anima 407 a 14-17 and Plato, Timeaus 37 a 6).

The theory of truth presented in *De Anima* appears to correspond to the theory of truth in *Metaphysics* (408 a 32-33; IX.10). It should also be noted that in *Posterior Analytics* II.9 Aristotle argues that the universal is gained through memory and experience (see also Physics 247 b10).

The subject of sensation is discussed in detail in *De Anima* II.5 and III.2. The theory of truth with regard to sensation also appears to run parallel to the theory of truth in *Metaphysics* IX.10. he says that if there is sensation of the object that belongs to each sense organ there is no possibility of error. In other words the sensation of the particular object proper to a special sensation cannot err. In this case there is or there is not sensation. (De Anima 425 a 30; 425 b 4; 418 a 20-24, 425 a 21-27; 428 b 9-22).

Error here can only mean the absence of sensation. The possibility of error arises when a single faculty of sense uniting particular sensations combines or associates the particular sensation with one another. Here the faculty of sense fails to make simple contact with reality. On the contrary, it connects and separates the data supplied by particular sensation.

It is not difficult to see that perception of special sense-object (for example, colour, sound, taste) runs parallel to the theory of truth (thinking of indivisibles) in *Metaphysics* IX.10. It is also true that we find this parallel in *De Anima* III.6 where Aristotle says that thinking of the indivisible is always true; mistakes occur only when



the indivisible is combined with something else (430 a 26-28).

Aristotle goes on to consider thinking of the indivisible with predication in which one thing is stated about something (*Posterior Analytics* II.1; *De Anima* 430 b 26-29; 431 a 8). thinking of indivisible is related to the simple statement of a thing's essence and in this respect resembles particular sensation. (*De Anima*, 431 a 8; *Physics*, 252 a 22-29; *Metaphysics* 1051 b22).

We are reminded in *De Anima* II.5 that the object of sensation is particular, whereas science is concerned with the universal (417 b 22-23). However, we find nothing how we arrive at the universal in *De Anima*. He also does not say much of the role of memory in reaching the universal from particular sensation. Although he discusses the question of memory at length in *De Memoria* we find almost nothing about the subject familiar from *Posterior Analytics* II.9. There is also nothing about experience nor its relation to knowing the indivisible. In general Aristotle does not say anything about the transition from knowledge of the particular to the knowledge of the universal. This is also true of *De Anima*. Nevertheless it appears that Aristotle's views on sensation and sensory association correspond to the theory of truth in *Metaphysics*.

#### 4. Thinking in *De Anima* III.4

Aristotle starts *De Anima* by saying:

Concerning that part of the soul (whether it is separable in extended space, or only in thought) with which the soul knows and thinks, we have to consider what is its distinguishing characteristic, and how thinking comes about. If it is analogous to perceiving it must be either a process in which the soul is acted upon by what is thinkable, or something else of a similar kind. This part, then, must (although impassive) be receptive of the form of an object, i.e. must be potentially the same as its object, although not identical with it: as the sensitive is to the sensible, so must mind be to the thinkable.<sup>13</sup>

I would first like to argue that one should not take the analogy between perceiving and thinking literally, for the analogy is profoundly imperfect. If *nous* is acted on by something (*paschei*) it is difficult to see how it can be unaffected (*apathes*). The word *apatheia*



signifies freedom from change, decay or destruction by anything else. We are told at 417b 2-5 that the concept of being acted upon (*paschein*) is not simple. So, Aristotle distinguishes two senses of it by saying that (a) it can mean the destruction of something by the contrary, (b) being acted upon may also describe a progress from potentiality to actuality by an agent which is already actual. As far as the latter sense of *paschein* is concerned, thinking and perceiving are similar but, in the case of thinking, what produces the activity of thinking is somehow in the soul while 417b 19-21 makes it clear that in the case of perceiving, what produces the activity is external. For this reason, only when it is in a state of first actuality can one think of what one wishes, which is impossible in the case of perceiving. In this respect, then, the analogy does not work but on the other hand it certainly has an important role in understanding the causal role of the object of thought. When Aristotle says that thinking is something like being affected by the object of thought (429a 14-15), he merely restates the necessity for an object both in thinking and perceiving. Therefore, 429a 17-18 simply refers to the relation between *nous* and objects of thought (*noeta*) as in the case of perceiving and objects of perception. Aristotle also speaks in the same way in *Metaphysics* at 1072a 30. He remarks here that *nous* is to be moved by the object of thought. That is why Aristotle says that thinking is like being affected, as in the case of perceiving, because it requires the object of thought. In sum, as it is the object of perception which causes perceiving, so it is the object of thought that produces actual thinking.<sup>14</sup>

I would now like to discuss why the analogy between perceiving and thinking is crucially important. Aristotle himself has very serious reservations concerning the analogy between perceiving and thinking. We have already indicated that the analogy produces two alternatives which are either that thinking will be being affected (*paschein*) or that it will be a process different from but analogous to that *παρὰ τὸ*.<sup>15</sup> Aristotle opts for the second alternative. He also says that perceiving is not an instance of *paschein* in the true sense of

the word, because it does not require the destruction of something by its contrary.<sup>16</sup>

Perception brings something potential into actuality. The latter is called *paschein* for convenience, for he says that there is no name for the difference.<sup>17</sup> However, there remains a very crucial difference between perceiving and thinking:

But that the perceptive and thinking faculties are not alike in their impassivity is obvious if we consider the sense organs and sensation. For the sense loses sensation under the stimulus of a too violent sensible object, e.g. of sound immediately after loud sound, and neither seeing nor smelling is possible just after strong colours and scents; but when mind (*nous*) thinks the highly intelligible, it is not less able to think of slighter things, but even more able; for the faculty of sense is not apart from the body, whereas the mind is separable.<sup>18</sup>

It is obvious from the above that the analogy between thinking and perceiving is not meant to be understood literally. The analogy indicates that in both cases (thinking and perceiving) the objects of perceiving and thinking have a causal role to play. In other words, perceiving and thinking are produced by their objects. However, the nature of the object of thought is different from the object of perception, for, as Aristotle says:

This is because actual sensation is of particulars, whereas knowledge is of universals; these in a sense exist in the soul itself. So it lies in man's power to use his mind wherever he chooses, but it is not in his power to experience sensation; for the presence of the sensible object is essential. The same thing is true of our knowledge of sensible objects, and for the same reason, viz. that sensible objects are particular and external.<sup>19</sup>

It should be noted that Anaxagoras' concept of *nous* has enormous influence on Aristotle's conception of *nous*. He perceived Anaxagoras "like a sober man among babblers" among the Presocratics.<sup>20</sup> The words *amiges* and *apathes* are borrowed from Anaxagoras, who had conceived *nous* as a universal principle which rules and gives order to everything in the universe.<sup>21</sup>

Aristotle reports that according to Anaxagoras *nous* understands everything and it is unmixed with anything so that it can dominate (in the sense of knowing).<sup>22</sup> Whether this means that *nous* is unmixed with its objects or unmixed with body has been the major source of controversy among Aristotelian commentators.<sup>23</sup> Aristotle writes at 429a 29 that:



... the soul is the place of forms [*topos eidon*], except that this does not apply to the soul as a whole, but only in its thinking capacity, and the forms occupy it not actually but only potentially.

In the light of what Aristotle says, it appears that *nous* is meant to be unmixed with its objects, namely the intelligible forms. For *nous* has no other nature than to be a capacity to think. In other words, the intrusion of anything foreign obstructs it from knowing and being in control, therefore *nous* has no characteristic except its capacity to think.

A picture of *nous* has also started to emerge - that it is also a principle of activity in the sense of being able to think itself, whereas perceiving is absolutely determined by its objects. Aristotle draws us a picture in which *nous* appears to be in control, and in this respect the analogy between thinking and perceiving does not seem to hold very well. However, the necessity of the object of thought for thinking remains to be essential in understanding human and divine thinking, which will be dealt with separately (see Chapter V in general).

## 5. Notes on *De Anima* III.5

The general meaning of *nous* in *De Anima* III.4 is a capacity for thinking, but in the chapter 5 of *De Anima* Aristotle speaks of the distinction between active and passive *nous*. Aristotle does not mention this distinction within *nous* elsewhere. Although the chapter contains short notes on the concept of *nous*, the explanation of it has proved to be very difficult. I have already dealt with the meanings of the concept of *nous* in Aristotle in general. Here, I shall restrict myself to discussing the views on the subject-matter in essence since my understanding of the concept of *nous* in Aristotle in general, as well as my interpretation of *De Anima* III.5, are fundamentally different from most.

I believe that it is useful to note at the beginning that the phrase *nous poietikos* is not to be found in Aristotle. However, he speaks of *nous pathetikos* at 430a 24 and of



*panta poiein* at 430 14-15, which in a sense justifies the phrase *nous poietikos*.<sup>24</sup>

In *De Anima* III.4 Aristotle is concerned with particular questions which can be stated as follows:

1. How does thinking differ from perceiving?
2. Is *nous* different from the rest of the psyche?
3. Is *nous* an actually separate thing or is it just the activity of the whole divine human being?

Aristotle has already said that psyche is the activity (*entelecheia*) of a living body and cannot exist apart from it, but there are some remarks to be recalled. For example, we are told that *nous* alone is divine and immortal.<sup>25</sup> In addition to this, in *De Generatione Animalium* at 736b 27-29 Aristotle says that the remaining possibility appears to be that *nous* comes from outside and is alone divine, for it involves no bodily activity.

Aristotle also writes at 430a 22-23 that *nous poietikos* is what it is in separation and is alone immortal and eternal. First of all, Aristotle does not say that the distinction between *nous poietikos* and *nous pathetikos* exists in the human soul, nor does he make any specific references to divine *nous* in *Metaphysics* XII. However, we know that divine *nous* is *ex hypothesi* immortal and eternal (I shall look at *Metaphysics* XII.7-9 in Chapter V).

Some Aristotelian commentators have come to conclude that there must be a connection between 430a 22-23 and the mention of *nous thurathen* in *De Generatione Animalium* at 736b 27-29.<sup>26</sup> In *De Generatione Animalium* II.3 Aristotle discusses the question of how a human foetus develops by mentioning the arrival of *nous* from outside. Although what Aristotle says there can be construed as referring to a divine *nous* in the human being, it is also perfectly possible to understand his saying on *nous* as capacity to think, in other words, to read the lines of 736b 27-29 into 430a 24, for this faculty has no organ and requires developed perceptual organs and capacities. In virtue

of this it cannot be present at the outset but it comes from the outside as long as it could not always have been present at the beginning.<sup>27</sup>

Aristotle also states in *Metaphysics* that the form of anything comes into being simultaneously with the whole. For example, the form of a bronze ball comes into being together with the ball itself. We can speak of health when there is a healthy person, but whether anything is left when a person has lost his/her health and the ball has been melted away, should be considered. He says that not all soul is eternal but *nous* is perhaps eternal. At 408b 29 the same possibility is mentioned again by stating that "*nous* is presumably something more divine and is imperishable".<sup>28</sup>

One should however be very careful about the language of divinity in Aristotle as well as his somehow tentative statements of the divinity of human *nous*. What we have quoted or referred to from Aristotle so far indicates that Aristotle does not use a precise language to assert that human *nous* is immortal, nor does he ever assert a definite identity between divine *nous* and the human *nous*. However, in *De Anima* III.5 Aristotle no longer deals with the question of *nous* in imprecise terms, it is time for him to deal with it seriously.

Aristotle describes *nous* in *De Anima* III.4 as unmixed and incorruptible.<sup>29</sup> When one compares the description of *nous* in *De Anima* III.4 one would find that the same epithets are also applied to divine *nous*, for example Aristotle describes the Unmoved mover as *apathes* at *Metaphysics* 1073a 11, but it should not be forgotten that the human intellect is described to be pure potentiality in *De Anima* at 429a 21-29, and this cannot be true of divine *nous*. Potentiality always implies change, imperfection. It also comes at the bottom of the scale of being in Aristotle whereas form and actuality are at the top of the scale of being.

The substance of the human intellect is a potentiality. It is hard to see how the characterization of the human *nous* as such prohibits any change against the human



*noetic* activity. It is a fact that it shifts even in theoretic thought, from one to another object. The only way one could avoid this possibility is to claim that we are sometimes thinking all things that the Unmoved Mover always thinks. And this would require a strict isomorphism between intellect of which *ousia* is pure *energeia* and the intellect of which *ousia* is a potentiality. The latter certainly has a measure of potentiality. But this still leaves open a possibility that human *noetic* activity may not be different from divine *noetic* activity. Simply because they engage in the same activity the one continuously and the other temporarily.

The human intellect as pure potentiality has no character of its own, it is potentially all the objects of thought but none of them actually. The human intellect, therefore, is of itself pure potentiality, like the rest of the soul (429b 30-31). It also cannot be involved continuously in the act of thinking (107sb 25; 1072b 15-31). Aristotle compares divine activity with human activity and says that we cannot think continuously whereas divine *nous* does. He also states in *Nicomachean Ethics* that abstract thinking can be harmful for one's health.<sup>30</sup> It is also important to point out that potentiality and matter are considered to be the same thing for Aristotle. They are contrasted with *entelecheia*.<sup>31</sup>

Activity is prior and superior to potentiality in Aristotle.<sup>32</sup> Now he has to explain how thinking comes out, i.e. how the potential *nous* is brought into actuality. From *Metaphysics*, *Physics* and *De Anima*, we are already familiar with Aristotelian principles that change requires matter and an agent to cause the change. In other words, there should be an agent to bring potentiality into actuality. The cause of change must be in actuality, for example man produces man. In the case of art the form must be in the mind of the artist. At 430a 10 Aristotle writes that:

Since in every class of objects, just as in the whole of nature, there is something which is their matter, i.e. which is potentially all the individuals, and something else which is their cause or agent in that it makes them all - the two being related as an art to its material - these distinct elements must be present in the soul also. Mind (*nous*) in the passive sense is such because it becomes all things; but mind has another aspect in that it makes all things; this is a kind of positive state like light; for in a sense light makes potential into actual col-



ours.

What is it then which will bring the potential *nous* into actuality? We know that in the case of physical change 'nature' is the inner principle of change, for example the parent and plant. In the case of art it is the craftsman and in sensation the object of sensation which brings about change. What is it, then, in the case of thinking?

Aristotle says that light is necessary to see colours just as active *nous* is required for the actualisation of intelligible objects (430a 14-17). Light and *nous poietikos* are both said to be activity and as such they are opposed to *dunamis*.<sup>33</sup>

Plato argues in the *Republic* that the form of the good is needed to make the objects of knowledge available to the intellect (507e - 508e). Aristotle appears to apply the analogy of light and vision to *nous poietikos*. However, he does not appeal to the form of the good to explain thinking but turns to his very much cherished principle of activity. *Nous poietikos* makes everything. It is the principle of activity which brings latent human potential intellect into activity. *Nous poietikos* does not apprehend the object of thoughts, it is already pure activity and as such it has no potentiality.<sup>34</sup>

Although Aristotle speaks of individual agents which cause change in nature, he also says that there must be a First Cause of everything.

What is the starting-point of motion in the spirit? The answer then is clear: as in the universe, so there, everything is moved by God; for in a manner the divine element in us is the cause of all our motions. And the starting-point of reason is not reason but something superior to reason. What, then, could be superior even to knowledge and to intellect, except God?<sup>35</sup>

It is impossible to progress from potentiality to actuality unless there is an ultimate as well as an immediate *telos*. That is why the potential intellect, which shares some of divine attributes, cannot be identified with *nous poietikos* and it is almost nothing without *nous poietikos*. Only *nous poietikos* can call this latent capacity, namely the human intellect, into activity and then it can think for itself. But the so-called autonomy of the human intellect cannot be continuous since it has to cease at some time. Some

Aristotelian scholars argue that Aristotle describes some sort of autonomous intellect in *De Anima* at 429b 5-9. They go further and identify it with the *nous poietikos*.<sup>36</sup> However, I agree with Modrak that the passage in question describes merely the state of *passive nous* after it acquires intelligible objects. Although the final line, namely 429b 9, has caused a lot of controversy, it is generally agreed that, having taken on the intelligible form, *nous* becomes able to think the form. In other words, *nous* thinks for itself.

I would now like to look in some detail at the attributes of *nous poietikos* as it is described in *De Anima* III.5.

1. *Nous poietikos* is separate (*choristos*), impassive (*apathes*), unmixed (*amiges*) and its essence (*ousia*) is activity (*energeia*).<sup>37</sup>
2. The active is superior to the passive.
3. Actual knowledge is identical (*energeia episteme*) with its object.<sup>38</sup>
4. *Nous poietikos* does not think intermittently.<sup>39</sup>
5. When isolated, it is just what it is. *Nous poietikos* is undying (*athanaton*) and incapable of being acted upon (*apathes*).<sup>40</sup>
6. We do not remember, for the *nous* in this sense cannot be acted upon.
7. *Nous pathetikos* is corruptible.
8. Without *nous poietikos* nothing thinks, or *nous pathetikos* thinks nothing.<sup>41</sup>

I would first like to point out that the wording at 430a 17-19 indicates a very striking parallel with the description of Unmoved Mover in *Metaphysics* at 1071b 20. Secondly, Aristotle does not say anything about it belonging to the human being. How can *nous poietikos*, as pure activity, belong to the human being who is after all composed of matter and form? How could we think of infinite numbers of potential human beings as having *nous poietikos* of which *ousia* is *energeia*?<sup>42</sup> The honourable epithets can only be attributed to *nous poietikos* and *nous pathetikos* is really just matter with potentiality.



Aristotle says that the intellect which is affected by *nous poietikos* is perishable. (De Anima III.5 430 a 24-25). It is obvious that Aristotle draws very sharp distinction between the absolute active nature of *nous poietikos* and the state of being bound to the body which describes the human soul. It should be noted that Aristotle defines the human soul as the *entelecheia* of a living body as such. The human soul is joined to the body itself. Although the activity of the soul occurs in a body its activity cannot be merely reduced to the body. In this context the separate existence of the potential intellect can be understood in relation to *nous poietikos*.

The actualization of the potential intellect occurs within a soul which is bound to the body, and this in a form which no longer has the purity of the cause of actualization. Nuyens sees a *contradiction latente* with De Anima III.4, where the potential and receptive intellect is said to be *apathes* (429 a 15) and *choristos* (429 b 5). Brentano identifies *nous pathetikos* with *phantasia*. Hicks says that 'the man cannot think without mental images, which imply sense and imagination, and these powers of the soul are conditioned by the body. The dissolution of the compound substance, the man himself, puts an end to the processes of sensation and imagination, and to the thinking of the man in so far as mental images are necessary thereto. (Hicks 508-509)

The potential intellect is activated by *nous poietikos*. The human soul having intellect does not know anything itself without at the same time possessing an image of the known object. The human intellect itself is not independent of corporality and corporeal magnitude. (On the question of thinking with images see: De Anima, 432 a 3-6 and 403 a 5-10).

In the physical world the *noetic* cannot exist separately from the sensible. This is true for the object of knowledge and for the subject. This also explains why the human intellect cannot know pure immateriality directly. (De Anima 431 b 18 – 19;



429 b 5; 432 a – 34).

It can know the eternal only as it exists in sensible reality. The human intellect knows it by means of the universal which can be gotten from sense experience. This is how the human intellect becomes an actually knowing intellect. (Metaphysics XII.6; De Anima III.4 and 5) The human intellect is corruptible but not as a potential intellect. On the contrary the human intellect is perishable in as much as it is actual. When it is being affected by *nous poietikos* it becomes actual. It is itself nothing. It knows nothing without *nous poietikos*.

For Aristotle the active is always superior and prior to the passive. *Nous poietikos*, whose *ousia* is *energeia*, is naturally considered to be superior to *nous pathetikos*. *Nous poietikos* does represent a perfect sense of *nous*, since we know that *nous* has different meanings in Aristotle, thus it is important to note that we face here a perfect sense of *nous* in *De Anima* III.5.

In coming to discuss the statement in which Aristotle identifies actual knowledge with its object, it is very interesting to see that Aristotle states the same thing of divine *nous*. Any sort of change is excluded from divine thinking, and it is the same for *nous poietikos*. We have to be very careful here, however. The *sameness thesis* cannot be confined to thinking. It has different applications in Aristotle's philosophy. According to him, in the case of perceiving, what is perceived and perceiving are one and the same thing.<sup>43</sup> However, in the case of perceiving the object is external and perceiving is of the individual.<sup>44</sup> When it comes to human thinking, the *sameness thesis* cannot be understood as in the case of perceiving. First of all, the object of thinking does not have to be present at the time of actual thinking. Secondly, once the intellect acquires knowledge it can think by itself.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, human thinking cannot be the same as divine thinking, for human thinking has to progress from potentiality to actuality. What brings the potential intellect into actuality in the first place? Aristotle states, at 430a 22,

that *nous poietikos* is not at one time thinking and at another not thinking. Its activity of thinking is uninterrupted whereas the individual noetic activity cannot be continuous. This can only mean that *nous poietikos* must exist before any human thinking occurs. The uninterrupted activity of *nous poietikos* follows from its being which is to be activity in its own essence. It is obvious that the description of *nous poietikos* is identical with the description of Unmoved mover in *Metaphysics*. Its thinking activity is eternal because its essence is *energeia*. Therefore, I would like to conclude that the *sameness* thesis has different applications in Aristotle.<sup>46</sup>

At 430a 22 Aristotle makes it much more clear that *nous poietikos* is not part of the human soul: "It is what it is in separation and is alone immortal and eternal". It is crucial to recall that *nous* has many different uses in Aristotle. Here, perhaps, we should bear in mind that Aristotle is not concerned with human immortality at all but he merely describes the perfect nature of perfect *nous* as he does in *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9.

Aristotle goes on to describe *nous poietikos* by stating that it is *athanatos* whereas *nous pathetikos* is *phthartos* (perishable). It is useful to recall the analogy between perceiving and thinking here, again. The point is that Aristotle considers human thinking a sort being acted upon, namely a type of *paschein*. When he says that *nous pathetikos* or passive *nous* is perishable the analogy between perceiving and thinking appears to be holding up well. Although there is a distinction between perceiving and thinking, nevertheless human thinking is a sort of *paschein*. The individual human being does not possess *nous poietikos*. Whatever sort of *nous* the human being has is not divine *nous*, namely not *nous poietikos*. The last sentence can be read in more than one way. Since there is no noun in the sentence but only a pronoun, one can interpret it as follows:

- a) without *nous poietikos* nothing can think;



- b) *nous pathetikos* thinks nothing.
- c) without *nous pathetikos* nothing thinks; or
- d) without *nous pathetikos* *nous poietikos* thinks nothing.

The last reading appears to be impossible as well as absurd, for it amounts to saying that that of which essence is *energeia* cannot think without that which is potential and perishable. It is equal to subordinate activity (*energeia*) to potentiality, which is, in other words, a negation of Aristotle's most cherished principle. However, (b) and (c) can be related to human thinking and be understood that the human being is not capable of thinking without *nous pathetikos*, for if an individual does not have any sense organs he/she is not capable of hearing, seeing or tasting. It would be the same if an individual is deprived of *nous pathetikos*. The agent which causes thinking in the individual might be there but if an individual lacks *nous pathetikos* he/she will not be able to think. When (b) is considered, it is obvious why it thinks nothing, for it is just a capacity to think and even being as a capacity it is perishable.<sup>47</sup>

## 6. Some Problems in De Anima III.5 430 a 10-14.

Is *nous poietikos* an internal part of the individual human being or is it external to it or is it identical with divine *nous* of *Metaphysics* XII? Let us quote the passage in question before proceeding further.

"Since in every class of objects, just as in the whole of nature, there is something which is their matter, i.e. which is potentially all the individuals, and something else which is their cause or agent in that it makes them all the time being related as an art to its material – these distinct elements must be present in the soul also." (De Anima, 430 a 10-14)

Comments on the passage begins with Aristotle's disciples Theophrastus. However, it was Alexander, at the end, in the second century AD, who explicitly argued that *nous poietikos* was not a part of the human soul but the divine *nous*. Themistius went



against Alexander in the next century and claimed that this kind of *nous* is in the soul and is the most valuable part of the human soul. (De Anima III.5, 430a 23; Themistius 103, 9 – 13) As a result he became the first representative of a long line of commentators, particularly strongly defended today, who even does not hesitate to insert the word 'human' into the sentence. Aquinas agreed with Themistius as has modern scholarship. Ross says that 'The active reason is distinctly presented there as existing in the human soul'. Allan goes further and adds italics: *mind is the most valuable* of those faculties which are present in the human soul; he says that an active and a potential mind must be distinguished 'in the soul'. (Ross, Metaphysics, 1, cxlviii, 1924; Allan, 82, 1952)

It appears that this is rather an unusual way to construe the sentence 'just as in the whole of nature ..... These distinct elements must be present in the soul also'. If we remember that the ultimate moving cause in nature is the Unmoved Mover the motive cause in things psychical, bringing the thought of individuals into activity, is something transcendent. This is a *nous* which is eternally active. The source of movement in the universe is the Unmoved Mover which nature emulates as far as it can. The Unmoved Mover moves everything as object of desire. (Guthrie 324-325, 1981)

However, the fact is that the phrase 'in the soul' has been the major difficulty in the way of proving that *nous poietikos* is the divine *nous* of *Metaphysics* XII. In addition to this there is another difficulty, that is, the words at 430 a 22-23 where Aristotle says that 'when isolated it is its true self and nothing more'. It has been argued that the use of the aorist participle (*choristheis*) implies a time when it was not separated. Thus the adjective in line 17. (*choristos*) means 'separable' but not 'separate'. (Ross, Metaphysics I, cxliiii. n.2, 1924; Brentano 139, 1977; Rist, 1966)

However, it is difficult to see how this 'immortal and eternal' *nous* can be an integral part of the mortal individual human soul. In general Islamic Aristotelian Commentators believed that *nous poietikos* is a transcendent *nous*. However, they differ from Aristotle in explicitly distinguishing this transcendent *nous* from divine

*nous*. According to them *nous poietikos* is one of the intellects subordinate to God. It acts, in a way, as a vicar of God on earth as I have presented their views in chapter 7. Averroes argues that the potential intellect of *De Anima* III.4 which is present in the individual human soul does not multiply with the plurality of human beings. (Brentano, 16-17) According to him there is one potential intellect for all people, just as there is only one causative intellect for all people. It should be accepted that there are good grounds for defending the view of the singleness of the potential intellect. For in *De Anima* Aristotle describes the potential intellect as unmixed, impassive and existing independently of the body. (De Anima III.4, 429 a 24-25; 429 a 29; 429 b 4-5)

It is clear that the honourable epithets which are assigned to the potential intellect directly corresponds to the properties which are attributed to *nous poietikos*. In *De Anima* (430 a 17-18) Averroes seems to be right in identifying the potential intellect with *nous poietikos*. For otherwise the former could not be in potentiality what causative intellect already is in actuality. They both exclude plurality, for in Aristotle matter is the principle of plurality (Metaphysics XII. 8).

Aquinas strongly opposed Averroes and he follows a quite different path from Alexander, the Neoplatonic and Islamic Aristotelian interpreters. According to him *nous poietikos* forms an integral part of the human soul. In his view, *nous poietikos* is not acquired during life, nor the individual human being can possess it in a fluctuating relationship with a divine *nous*. He argues that the individual human being possesses this principle from the outset. (Kal, 102-103-104) It should be noted that at the end of *De Anima* III.4 Aristotle is confronted by the problem of how intellect and an object of thinking can exist in a material world. It is shown in *De Anima* III.5 that this is only possible in virtue of an intellect which is in actuality. Aquinas holds that *nous poietikos* in *De Anima* III.5 is wholly immanent in the human soul. In this respect *nous*



*poietikos* is an ontological fact of an individual human being.

## 7. Final Thoughts on the Concept of *Nous* in *De Anima*

The question of whether Aristotle believes in human immortality or not does not constitute my main concern. Therefore, I do not look into *De Anima* III.5 particularly to prove or disprove the immortality of the human soul. My reference to *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9 in my discussion of the conception of *nous* in *De Anima* is not simply to prove that *nous poietikos* is identical with divine *nous* in *Metaphysics*. What interests me in Aristotle's theory of thinking is how he describes human thinking and divine thinking. Furthermore, why does Aristotle describe divine thinking in the way he does in *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9 which represents climax and culmination of Aristotle's thought on the subject?

Transcendental and naturalistic accounts of the concept of *nous* in Aristotle have had their champions from antiquity through the Middle Ages until the present day, but what is peculiar as far as transcendental and naturalistic accounts of the concept of intellect are concerned, is that almost no attention is given to the term *energeia* in which Aristotle describes human and divine thinking in *De Anima*, *Metaphysics* and *Ethics*. In virtue of this, Aristotle's account of thinking in general has not, I believe, been uncovered at all. I hope to achieve this by changing direction and concentrating on the nature of divine (non-discursive) and human thinking. By doing so I hope to reach a new understanding of the nature of thinking in Aristotle. This is what I will do after making some final remarks on *De Anima* III.5.

The analysis of *De Anima* III.4 and III.5 has raised serious doubts whether *nous poietikos* can be an internal part of the human psyche. It appears that Aristotle is describing the divine *nous* of *Metaphysics* here. In fact, when Aristotle describes *nous poietikos* he does not use indefinite terms or imprecise language, he also does not explicitly state that it belongs to the human soul. On the contrary, *nous poietikos* appears to have the same



attributes as the Unmoved Mover or divine *nous*. They are both described as identical with themselves. The two are also principles of activity. Aristotle also attributes to both of them the uninterrupted thinking activity which they have in virtue of being essentially activity.

Each species tries to realise its form and each member of a species has its own external principle, namely an already actual member of the same species which has been responsible for bringing about an individual development from potentiality to actuality. However, Unmoved Mover is the ultimate principle of change, for without the perfect and eternal activity of Unmoved Mover, no change would take place whatsoever.

The principles which direct physical movements or change are of two orders, one of which is not itself physical, for it is not in motion, nor has it in itself the principle of motion. Such would be anything that should move other things while itself motionless, as being absolutely unchanging and primary, and such the essential characteristic or form in its capacity of constituting the end and aim to be reached, and therefore, since Nature is purposeful, demanding to be recognised by the natural philosopher.<sup>48</sup>

Aristotle elaborates four causes in the physical world and comes to say that in addition to these there is that which is first and moves everything. Unmoved Mover moves everything without being moved. The universe depends on it. *De Anima* III.4 and III.5 represent the climax of Aristotle's account of thinking as chapter 6 of *Metaphysics* XII signifies the culmination of the account of motion and changes in nature. He explains in *Metaphysics* why the ultimate principle of change in the universe must be divine being. Despite the frightening compression of *De Anima* III.5, Aristotle also shows us why the ultimate principle of change in the human thinking must be divine being. By doing so, Aristotle unifies the universe by the ultimate principle which is supreme *Nous*, its essence is pure activity and as such it is the ultimate principle of all change in everything.

## 8. On Understanding the Language of Divinity in Aristotle

I believe that the source of much confusion of understanding Aristotle's account of thinking in *De Anima*, *Metaphysics* and *Ethics* stems from the language he uses when he describes *nous* and thinking. It is true that he has a penchant for describing *nous* and thinking as somehow divine, but that does not mean, for example, that one can automatically assume that human thinking is identical with divine thinking, or that the human intellect is the same as divine *nous*. Nevertheless, Aristotle frequently enlists the language of divinity in his discussion of *nous* and thinking. If this is true, how are we supposed to understand Aristotle's account of *nous* and thinking? How can we interpret the account of *nous poietikos* in *De Anima* III.5 where Aristotle describes it in terms of the divinity of the thought?

It is generally assumed that Aristotle attributes divinity to the human intellect, so human thinking is divine. Some go to *Metaphysics* XII.7 to claim that divine thinking is identical with human thinking, thus taking *nous poietikos* to be essentially the same as divine *nous*, just to explain how we think necessary truths.

It should be noted that the identification of *nous poietikos* with divine *nous* does not depend on Aristotle's use of the language of divinity, for in *De Anima* III.5 Aristotle does not appeal to the language of divinity to describe it, he simply uses the same argument as that used when he describes divine *nous* in *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9. Therefore, the naturalistic interpretation of *De Anima* III.5, namely making *nous poietikos* an integral part of the human being, cannot be defended by claiming that Aristotle treats the individual *nous* and its noetic activity as somehow divine since in fact this does not entail assuming *nous poietikos* as divine. The language used in his description of it is precise and has nothing to do with the language of divinity in Aristotle.<sup>49</sup>

*Nicomachean Ethics* is also an important source for understanding Aristotle's



conception of thinking. It indicates yet another application of *nous* in book VI where *nous* is considered in relation to practical reasoning.<sup>50</sup> The most important thing here, however, is the description of *theorein* in book X. *De Anima* provides, in a sense, a purely logical description of *nous* but *Nicomachean Ethics* X enables us to understand the nature of *nous* in relation to human intellectual activity. What does *theorein* mean? Why should we theorise? How does it differ from other intellectual activity?

I believe that Aristotle's account of thinking culminates in *Nicomachean Ethics*, for only there can we come to understand the implication of the conception of *nous* in *De Anima* and only by turning to *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9 can we realise why we should not identify our *nous* with divine *nous* and our happiness with the happiness of the supreme *nous*.

We were told at 1177a 22 - b 25 that *theoria* is self-sufficient, leisured and shares some sort of continuity, but Aristotle identifies the real self with thinking activity which constitutes perfect happiness and, in being happy, the human individual resembles divine being. Why does Aristotle conceive the real self as *nous* and why does he think that the perfect happiness of the individual depends on thinking activity? It is important to note that *theoria* does not necessitate motion, for it does not conceive any objects in terms of *kinesis*. What I mean by that is that the objects of *theoria* are not desired or repugnant.<sup>51</sup> *Theoria* does not produce anything.<sup>52</sup> Among the activities of the human *nous*, *theoria* represents the perfect thinking activity. It is for this reason that *theoria* is described as *autarkes* and *energeia*, which means it is complete, perfect and has no need of other than itself. That *theoria* is not for the sake of something follows from its being activity.<sup>53</sup>

Here, understanding the term *energeia* becomes crucial, for it is this term which both describes human thinking in *Nicomachean Ethics* and divine thinking in *Metaphysics*. Thinking as *energeia* excludes any sort of change: it is perfect and



complete, and as such thinking as *energeia* represents the perfect intellectual activity of the human being. Does this, however, mean that when the human individual is involved in this sort of thinking, he or she engages in something identical with divine thinking activity? Again, one should be very careful here. Although we can think at our will, we cannot think uninterruptedly like divine beings, we can only engage in thinking activity for some time. This is because the term *energeia* with which Aristotle describes human and divine thinking has many applications in Aristotle. The perfect instance of being pure *energeia* can only be thought of divine being, which is why human noetic activity cannot go on for ever, whereas divine noetic activity is continuous (see Chapter V).

Aristotle says that the divine *nous* thinks itself. That is, in other words, to say that the divine *nous* thinks the same thing always. Thus we are told at 1074 b 28-29 that if divine *nous* is not the act of thinking (*noesis*) but potentiality, then it is reasonable to think that the continuity of its thinking would be tiring. It can be inferred that any intellect that thinks something different from it – intellect's object changes – has a measure of potentiality. Aristotle in effect is denying that the *ousia* of divine *nous* can be potentiality. Thus he appears to reject that even the intellect of which *ousia* is a potentiality thinks the same thing continuously it would be tiring. For example, it is possible to think that it would have to move from a potential state to its actual exercise. In other words it would perhaps have to keep from switching to another object or back to its original potential state. (Wedin, 1988, 209-220). If the *ousia* of two intellects, namely divine and human *nous*, are of different nature then it is hard to see how the difference between their *noetic* activity could be reduced to a difference in degree.

Aristotle compares human noetic activity with divine noetic activity in *Ethics* and *Metaphysics*. In both works *energeia* describes the nature of noetic activity which makes

the analogy hold. However, it is difficult to argue this alone is enough to establish an absolute identity between divine and human noetic activity. Aristotle says that if divine being is living and active then what sort of activity can we attribute to it if we take action and production from it (1178b 20-21)? He confesses similar concerns about divine activity in *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9, and concludes that it would be *theoria* in the perfect sense of the term, that *theoria* as *energeia* is complete, perfect and is an end in itself. He is well aware of the fact that any change would signify imperfection and incompleteness on the side of divine thinking. That is why Aristotle himself is very cautious about attributing a full-blown divine status to human *nous*. Although we can think at will and can contemplate for some extended time, our activity cannot be continuous, it has to cease at some time. Aside from this, human thinking progresses from potentiality to actuality, in other words human thinking does not exclude potentiality and change, so it can be said that we resemble divine *nous* in engaging in thinking activity but we do not become gods, nor can we consider our thinking to be identical with divine thinking.

I have already tried to show that the description of *nous poietikos* is to be identical with Unmoved Mover in *Metaphysics* (1073a 4). At 1073a 4 Aristotle says that the divine being is eternal, unmoving and separate. He goes on to assert also at 1073a 11 that the first mover is *apathes*. At 1072a 25 the First Mover is described as *ousia* and *energeia*. It is fascinating to see how Aristotle postulates noetic activity on a cosmic level. He tries to explain the eternal source of the eternal movement in the universe. He comes to say that an eternal motion can be caused only by an eternal principle, so it must move everything without being moved. Finally, he concludes that the nature of the Unmoved Mover as being the source of eternal motion is *energeia* and it thinks itself.<sup>54</sup>

In his postulation of Unmoved Mover, Aristotle unifies his thoughts as follows:



- a) Unmoved Mover is the ultimate principle of the motion in the universe.<sup>55</sup>
- b) Unmoved Mover is that of which the *ousia* is *energeia* and as such Unmoved Mover represents the perfect instantiation of being pure activity. It is an end itself, complete and perfect.<sup>56</sup>
- c) The object of thinking determines the nature of thinking.<sup>57</sup>
- d) Unmoved Mover moves everything as an object of desire without itself being moved.
- e) It thinks itself, since it is the best thing.

Aristotle is well aware that the identity of thinking with its objects contains many difficulties. Although it is true to say that thinking is identical with its object, as in the case of perceiving, nevertheless thinking must be more than just the actualisations of its objects. If one insists on the analogy between perceiving and thinking, there is nothing to prevent the intellect from being identical with immortal thoughts. That is why Aristotle says that divine *nous* thinks itself and its object of thinking is itself. Some have come to believe that such thinking is vacuous and amounts to no thinking whatsoever. However, this does not seem to be right. First of all, when they consider the divine *nous* as thinking itself, they do not take into account that Aristotle describes the divine noetic activity as *energeia*. When we contemplate what happiness is, we still think of it in propositional terms, for example we can think that it could be X, Y or Z. However, when we are happy there is no thinking in propositional terms. However, our life cannot be *energeia* as a whole, for we consist of matter and form. There are some things we do, like cooking and working, which are *kinetic* and there are other things in our lives which are *energeiai*, for example thinking and being happy. So, in thinking and being happy we are one with ourselves, but as soon as one starts to think what happiness is, even "without its matter", one is involved in propositional thinking.<sup>58</sup> This is why Aristotle appeals to the analogy of touching. Thinking in the sense of *energeia* is



like touching: you cannot be wrong about it. You might be wrong in judging what you are touching, but you cannot be wrong in judging that you are touching.

A neo-Platonic interpretation of non-propositional thinking is of a completely different nature. On this view, God thinks everything in totality whereas this is impossible for us. However, the neo-Platonic reading has no textual support in identifying the human *nous* and its noetic activity with divine *nous*. *Noesis noesos* does not resemble human thinking in any sense, since the object of divine *nous* and the object of the human intellect are not identical in their nature. Perhaps it is time to identify two different sorts of human thinking:

- i) thinking an intelligible object without its matter at our will: in doing so our intellect becomes identical with its object but thinking is still propositional;
- ii) thinking as *energeia*, in which our thinking is not a thinking on what we think, but it is identical with what we think, what we live; for example happiness. In these sort of activities there is no gap between what is thought and thinking, what happiness is and being happy. However, as I have repeatedly said, this sort of thinking is limited in the case of human thinking, whereas in the case of divine being the last trace of distinction between thought and its object disappears; their essence is for ever one.

The description of the divine *nous* given in *Metaphysics* is identical with that of *nous poietikos*. They are pure *energeia* and have no objects for thinking, apart from themselves. The sense of any potentiality is also excluded from both of them.

The Unmoved mover, the principle of the eternal motion in the universe is identified with divine *nous* and goodness, and is also included among the attributes. Although *theoria* is the best type of thinking activity that the individual human being can attain, *noesis noesos* does not characterise human thinking. We are able to know things.

After acquiring knowledge of things, we can then go on to apprehend and reflect on what we know at our disposal. However, this type of thinking necessitates objects for

thinking and the second type of thinking as *energeia* in the case of human thought does not absolutely eliminate the risk of change, whereas God represents the perfect instantiation of being pure activity.

So far I have argued that it seems to be hard to establish an absolute identity between human and divine thought. I have also claimed that Aristotle does not describe *nous poietikos* in terms of 'as-if' divinity. However, he explains human thought by using the as-if language of divinity. Aristotle asserts the divinity of human thinking in several places, but the locus classicus is *Nicomachean Ethics* X.7 and X.8. 1177a 13-16 refers to the sort of activity that constitutes happiness. According to Aristotle, perfect happiness will be the best activity of *nous*. Whether this is itself divine or the most divine thing in us is not decided. The activity he refers to is theoretical activity. Although *theoria* is to define divine thinking, this does not entail that human *theoria* is fully divine, so the formulation at 1177a 13-14 is asserted in a very cautious way and does not allow us to treat the most divine element in us, *nous*, as something to be *ipso facto* mention of God. It certainly requires qualification.<sup>59</sup>

At 1177a 20b 26, Aristotle praises *theoria* as a precious activity but he does not mention that it is divine. Finally, he proclaims at 1177b 26 - 1178a 2 that the life of *theoria* in its perfect sense would be beyond the human level. The life of *theoria* in its perfect sense can only be of God. Human individuals can engage in *theoria* not qua being composite thing but qua having something divine in them. *Nous* is the best thing in us but the ultimate sense of *nous* does belong to divine being. 1177a 20-21 establishes that the best thing in us is relatively divine. That is why we can only speak of as-if divinity and as-if immortality in Aristotle, and that is why it is important to read *De Anima* III.4 and III.5 in the light of what Aristotle says of *nous* in *Ethics* and *Metaphysics*. If someone insists on human immortality, he/she must turn to somewhere other than Aristotle to establish it.



Aristotle concludes his discussion of *theoria* by identifying it with the activity of God. What he says at 1178b 7-23 is far from establishing human theoretical activity as fully divine. Divine *nous* is not in need of resorting to action or production, the perfect sense of the activity of *theoria* is identified with God, which is why Aristotle asserts that "... the activity of God, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative (*theoretike*)."<sup>60</sup> What we can infer from this sentence is that the activity of God surpasses everything and this activity is *theoretike*. Aristotle does not say that theoretical activity is above all other activities, in virtue of which it can only belong to God. It is important to make the distinction, for it allows divine theoretical activity to differ from its human counterpart. In other words, it indicates that divine theoretic activity may not be the same in kind as human theoretic activity after all.

Aristotle tells us in *Nicomachean Ethics* X that we do some things sometimes which God always does. Again, this does not establish that human *nous* is similar in kind to divine *nous* and that the activity of God is identical with human theoretical activity. I believe that if we pay enough attention to the use of the language of divinity in describing human *nous* and its activity, we may be able to gain a deeper insight into Aristotle's conception of *nous* and thinking. He attributes divinity even to bees in *De Generatione Animalium* at 761a 4-5, but one cannot think seriously that bees are immortal, so when Aristotle says that *nous* is something more divine than the corruptible composite, that does not automatically suggest that human *nous* is immortal and eternal, which is why Aristotle says that:

... choice cannot relate to impossibles, and if anyone said he chose them he would be thought silly; but *there may be a wish even for impossibles, e.g. for immortality*.<sup>61</sup>

## 9. An Additional Note on *Homoiosis Theoi* Argument

Kahn suggests in his article called 'The Role of *Nous* in the Cognition of First



Principles in Posterior Analytics II.9' (1981, 414) that it is difficult to see how our divine *noetic* activity could be a likeness (*homoionia*) of the divine *energeia* (Nicomachean Ethics X.8, 1178 b27) if the individual human *nous* is not the same in kind with divine *nous*. Furthermore we are said to be at our best moments but God is always in that state (Metaphysics 1072 b 25).

Kahn can be objected by pointing out that according to Aristotle things that are different in kind may be essentially activity (*energeia*). Aristotle describes *eudaimonia* and light as activity but they cannot be seriously taken to be as God. For example, certain animals imitate human behaviours. Can we say just because of that they are the same in kind? What, Aristotle says in Metaphysics is that 'our wonder is compelled if god is always in the best state we sometimes are in, all the more if it is in a better state than it is'. Kahn glosses over this phrase in his article. But it seems that what Aristotle wants to say is that God must be always in a state better than the best state we are ever in. (Wedin, 1988, chapter VI)

Kahn's argument is primarily based on his analysis of *De Anima* III.5 where *nous poietikos* is conceived to reveal the mysteries of divine *nous*. However, the relation between divine *nous* and *nous poietikos* cannot be automatically presumed for human and divine *nous*. (See Chapter V). It can, therefore, be argued that sameness in kind does not necessarily show that human and divine *nous* are the same. It is important to note that human thought is sequential and moves from thought to thought whereas divine thought does not. Nevertheless one could suppose that the Unmoved Mover always thinks of sets of objects that we sometimes think. Is this enough to claim that the human and divine *nous* are the same in kind? It must be difficult to answer the question affirmatively. It appears that the sameness in kind argument must correspond to sameness in content. However, it is very well known that Aristotle says that we never think without images but this is not required for divine *nous*.



### Notes to Chapter III

- 1.. Wilkes, K.V., *Psyche versus the Mind*, 109-129, in *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, edited by Nussbaum, M.C. and Rorty, A.O., Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992 (my emphasis).
- 2.. 449b 31; 431a 16; 431b 2; 432a 8; a13; 432a 3-9; and *Metaphysics* XII.9.
- 3.. Leshner, J., 'The Meaning of *Nous* in the *Posterior Analytics*', *Phronesis*, 18, 1973 44-68.
- 4.. *Republic* 511d-e, Lee, H.D., *Classical Quarterly*, 29, 223-24, 1935;
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- 6.. See, for example, Wedin, M., *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1988; Modrak, D., 'Aristotle on Thinking', *Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 2, 209-36, 1987.
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- 10.. Wilkes, K.V., *Physicalism*, 115-16, London, 1978; see also her article *Psyche versus the Mind*, 109-129, 1992; Clark also identifies the *nous poietikos*, which he calls "poetic", with God. Clark, S.R., *Aristotle's Man*, chapter V.3, Oxford, 1975.
- 11.. Jaeger, 1923, 331-34; During, Ingemar, 'Aristotle and the Heritage from Plato', *Erano*s, 62, 84-99, 1964.



- 12.. On the former point see Wedin, M.V., *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle*, 160-265, New Haven and London, 1988; according to Watson, *nous poietikos* appears to be nothing - see Watson, G., *The Stoic Theory of Knowledge*, 10, Belfast, 1966. Wilkes discards the *nous poietikos* as something being imposed upon Aristotle's psychology by his ethical, theological and metaphysical preoccupations (1978: 116).
- 13.. 429a 10 - 429a 18.
- 14.. However, some take the analogy between perceiving and thinking very literally. By doing so, thinking becomes a passive activity of an individual being. See for example Kal, 1987: 84. There are some others who simply ignore Aristotle's reservation on the analogy between perceiving and thinking: see Wedin, 1988: 163.
- 15.. 429a 14-15.
- 16.. *De Anima* II.2, 417b 6-7.
- 17.. 418a 1; see also *De Sensu* 4, 441b 23, where Aristotle also speaks of perceiving and thinking. He points out that thinking is like perceiving but not like learning.
- 18.. 429a 29-b5.
- 19.. *De Anima* II 417b 19-25.
- 20.. *Metaphysics*, 984b 15, 985a 18.
- 21.. *Physics* 256b 25, *Metaphysics* 984b 15, 985a 18.
- 22.. 429a 18-21
- 23.. Alexander, Themistius, Hicks versus Philoponus, Averroes, Aquinas.
- 24.. I agree with Guthrie that it is harmless to call *nous poietikos* active or creative reason, for it means both active and creative. See 430a 14-15 and 430a 18. However, Aristotle does not have the concept of creation in his writings.
- 25.. During, I., *Aristotle's Protrepticus*, Göteborg, 1961 (fragment 10) and Ross, 10a).
- 26.. Kal, 1987: 91-92.
- 27.. Modrak, D.K., *Aristotle on Thinking*, 225-226, Boston Area Colloquim in Ancient Philosophy, 2, 1987, 209-36; it is also useful to see a detailed discussion of *nous thurathen* in Moraux, P., *A propos du nous thurathen chez Aristotle*, Autour d'Aristote, edited by Mansion, A., Louvain, 1955. On the question of why we should not take the phrase *nous thurathen* as divine (*theion*), see *The Language of Divinity in Aristotle* 79 Chapter III section 5. For now, let me say that in *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle refers to the analogy between human and divine thinking to clarify the use of *theion* in somewhat similar context - see 1177a 13-17; b 30-31.
- 28.. See *Metaphysics* 1070a 24-26; 413b 24-27; 403a 10-11; 408b 18-19.
- 29.. 429a 24-25.
- 30.. See *Metaphysics* 1072b 14-16 and 24-25; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1153a 20.
- 31.. *Metaphysics* 1078a 30-31. Here, Aristotle contrasts *hulikos* as the opposite of *entelecheia*.
- 32.. 1049b 4-13.
- 33.. On this point see Bonitz, Index 253 646ff. Light is *entelecheia* at 419a 11 and *energeia* at 418b 9.
- 34.. 430a 10; 1073a 4; cf 430a 17, 107a 4, 1072a 25. It is particularly striking to see the description of *nous poietikos* as *ousia on energeia* at 430a 17 and Unmoved Mover as *ousia kai energeia* at 1072a 25.
- 35.. 1248a 25-30.
- 36.. For example, see Wedin, M., *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle*, 1988, pp.160, 177. 432a 8-9; Lowe, N., 'Aristotle on Kinds of Thinking', *Phronesis*, 28: 17-30, 1983.
- 37.. 430a 17-19.



- 38.. 430a 19-21.
- 39.. 430a 22.
- 40.. 430a 22-23.
- 41.. 430a 25.
- 42.. Rist argues that every soul has its own individual Active and Passive intellect. But this creates millions of pure actualities. Rist, J.M., Notes on Aristotle *De Anima* 3.5, *Classical Philology*, 1966.
- 43.. 425b 26, 426a 26; 431b 20 - 432a 1, 429b 6; 630-1; 430a 3,7; 430a 14-15, 430a 19-20; 431a 1-2; 1072b 21; 1074b 38 - 1075a 5.
- 44.. 417b 19-23.
- 45.. 429b 9 where Aristotle says that intellect thinks itself. Also see: 429a 14-15; 429b 7; 429a 13-14; 429a 24; 430a 3-5.
- 46.. What I mean by *sameness thesis* is that knowing and known are identical, 430a 3-5 where Aristotle says that the intellect is identical with what it thinks with. See also 202a 20; b 9; b 12; b 16; b 22; 202b 19-21; 202b 14-16; 425b 26a 26, 431b 20 - 432a 1; 429b 6; b 30-1; 430a 3-7; 430a 14-15; 430a 19-20; 431a 1-2; 1072b 21; 1074b 38 - 1075a 5.
- 47.. Barbotin indeed chooses to adopt the reading of (d). On this point see Guthrie (1981), 322.
- 48.. Physics, 198a 35-65.
- 49.. Wedin, 1988, p.209.
- 50.. 1143a 25-66; 1139a 33-65; 1097b 2; 1112a 33; 1139a 18. See also *Posterior Analytics* 1.31 where Aristotle speaks of moving from particulars to universals in relation to perception.
- 51.. *De Anima* 432b 26-29; 433a 15.
- 52.. 1039a 27-29; 1180b 21; also see *Metaphysics* 982a 1.
- 53.. *Metaphysics* 982b 11-27.
- 54.. Modrak finds it hard to see the relationship between the postulation of Unmoved Mover and its description as thinking. See Modrak, 1987: 231-232.
- 55.. 1071b 20-21; 1071b 10-11.
- 56.. 1073a 11; 1072a 25; 1073a 4; 1072b 13-30.
- 57.. 1178b 20-21; 1075a 3-5; 1074b 34; 1079b 35-38; 983a 3-1; 425b 17-33.
- 58.. 1075a 3-5; 1074b 31-33; 1074b 34; 1074b 35-38.
- 59.. At 1178b 32 Aristotle says that happiness would be a sort of *theoria*: "... whether it (*nous*) be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us ...".
- 60.. Ross, 1178b 21-22.
- 61.. Ross, *Nicomachean Ethics* III.2, my emphasis.

#### IV ON DISCURSIVE AND NON-DISCURSIVE THINKING

##### 1. Some Preliminaries on Discursive and Non-Discursive Thinking

The word 'discursive' is commonly contrasted with the word 'intuitive'. There are thirteen words in English which are derived from the Latin stem of the word *discurre*. All the uses of the word indicate that it implies change either in relation to time, space or a passage from concepts to concepts. In essence the word 'discurrere' contains the idea of change. It is also important to note that the word 'discursive' means 'propositional' in philosophical contexts. So it has come to define the type of thought which is expressed propositionally. But the phrase 'non-discursive thinking' has been used to describe the type of thought which differs fundamentally from discursive thinking. The concept of non-discursive thinking excludes any change or process either in reaching knowledge or in thinking. It is generally associated with the word intuition. However, it would be very difficult and also controversial to think about the Greek counterparts of 'non-discursive' and 'discursive' in Aristotle. Although *dianoia* describes discursive activity of intellect, *nous* is far from describing intuitive activity of intellect in Aristotle. At least this is not the case for the individual human *nous*. It should also be noted that the individual human *nous* is not infallible in all its operations in Aristotle (see the section on *nous* and the notes to Introduction).

Of course it is true that *nous* is considered to be infallible in so far as it thinks about an essence. However, the point here is that *nous* is not conceived to be infallible with respect to all its operations (*nous* is *heteros logos*; 415 a 11; of *dianatikon*, see: 414 b 18-19) In the *Politics* Aristotle divides the soul into two, irrational and rational. He equates *nous* with the rational (1334 b 17-20). It describes practical as much as theoretical (433 a 14-18). Thus it is right to say that *nous* cannot be infallible in all its



capacities, however, *nous* is said to be infallible as the principle of knowledge (10 b 7-8; 433 a 26; 428 a 17-18). But it is also true that it is used to include judgements of all sorts (De Anima 427 b 8-9). Thus it appears that one has to be cautious about confining Aristotle's uses of *nous* to a single meaning.

Let us now look into these two concepts in some detail. There are two notions in Greek philosophy which are covered by 'non-discursive thinking'. It has been held that there are two kinds of thinking, one of which is called immediate thinking and the other of which is demonstrative or inferred. Immediate thinking is contrasted with demonstrative thinking as non-discursive thinking is contrasted with discursive thinking. It seems to me that these two notions can be traced back to the word *nous*. And in Aristotle also two notions are to be associated with the different uses of *nous*. For in *Posterior Analytics* he is fundamentally concerned with demonstrative thinking. However, in *Metaphysics* he tries to explain how God can escape discursive thinking.<sup>1</sup>

I believe that we can talk about two types of non-discursive thinking in Aristotle. I call one of the two 'imperfect non-discursive thinking' (human noetic activity) and the other one 'perfect discursive' (divine noetic activity). There are some interpreters for whom Aristotle believed only in intuitive non-discursive thinking, for example Jaeger.<sup>2</sup> Intuitive non-discursive thinking involves a lot of difficulties which are connected with the nature of intuition and intuitive knowledge. Although non-propositional thinking is also linked with the term intuition, the main emphasis is on the feature of non-propositionality. Furthermore, it is of the nature of thinking which does not involve any change. Language is denied. Aristotle's God can speak but in order not to be less than perfect it must be silent. It is a god which does not use language and need not say anything. It is completely immersed in its thought. However, I should make clear that philosophers have not accepted that there are two types of non-discursive thinking. Some have held that there



is only intuitive non-discursive thinking in Aristotle.<sup>3</sup>

In the case of non-propositional thinking, one is said to think of concepts in isolation, such as goodness, beauty and truth. However, A C Lloyd has come to construe this from a different angle. He claims that non-propositional thinking is thinking without thinking something about, say, beauty. In saying that "beauty is truth" you think of beauty in isolation.<sup>4</sup>

Some more clarification is needed before we proceed further. Although two views of non-discursive thinking differ from each other, nevertheless they agree that the words 'discursive' or 'propositional' always contain the idea of change and 'non-discursive' or 'non-propositional' absolutely excludes any sort of change. In the case of 'demonstrative' or 'inferred' the transition is taken to be from premise to conclusion. However, in the case of 'propositional' the passage or the transition is understood to be between concepts.

In saying that truth is goodness or beauty is truth, the transition is from subject to predicate of a proposition but the subject and the predicate of a proposition are themselves thoughts.

## **2. Non-Discursive Thinking as *Energeia***

It is obvious that that the term 'discursive' signifies transition or process. On the contrary, the phrase non-discursive has come to mean 'completeness', directness and perfection and I argue in Chapter V that the conception of non-discursive thinking as 'being complete' and 'perfect' is closely connected with the very Aristotelian term *energeia*.

It is true that the process of gaining knowledge requires a lot of laborious processes such as making observations, comparing, testing etc. The search for

knowledge seems to be of a *kinetic* nature and I call this type of thinking *kinetic thinking*. However, when we have solved a problem or have discovered a truth, our minds are no longer engaged in a process. What we have now as knowledge is complete and we can think of reality via it whenever we like. However, we still think of reality but we are not in touch with reality. Therefore, even contemplation appears to be still in some way *discursive*. Nevertheless, it could be said that we reach knowledge of things through the process of searching so that searching remains essential. Although Aristotle says in the first phrase of *Metaphysics* that "we all desire to know by nature" by the end of *Metaphysics* 'desire to know' is not what is important any longer. What must be achieved now is 'to touch', 'to contact' reality.<sup>5</sup>

Aristotle tries to explain the most perfect type of thinking (in other words, perfect non-discursive thinking) in his conception of God in *Metaphysics* XII.9. In God's thinking there are no premises used to reach conclusions or to enable the thinker to think of concepts (essences) in isolation. And naturally there is no passage or change whatsoever, and I call this type of thinking *active thinking* or divine non-discursive thinking and I shall deal with this in Chapter V.

I would now like to consider some of the main features of discursive and non-discursive thinking in detail. It appears that the idea of non-discursive thinking is driven by psycho-epistemological and ethical concerns in general. Further, I believe that the reason behind it is very much our human worries. Things which are in flux or in constant change were and have been puzzling, terrifying for human beings. At the intellectual level, these feelings cause the belief that it is impossible to know anything which is in flux all the time. Thus this scepticism is necessarily followed by intellectual pessimism which offers nothing and solves nothing. By contrast, intellectual optimism produces or tries to provide solutions to many puzzles with which we are faced as



human beings. Of such puzzles and questions we could mention some out of hundreds such as: What is happiness? What is truth? What is knowledge? In general intellectual optimism is followed by those who believe in the possibility of non-discursive thinking. Of course there are many divergent views of the nature of non-discursive thinking but any version of it is essentially and intellectually optimistic.<sup>6</sup>

The main features of non-discursive thinking correspond to real knowledge. Real knowledge is perceived to be eternal, immaterial and unchangeable. Non-discursive thinking has nothing to do with any sort of change, so it avoids any problems that discursive thinking encounters. But I should make it clear that I do not definitely reduce the formulation of non-discursive thinking to some sort of psychological need, nor do I do it in explaining discursive thinking. I only wish to place some emphasis on the question of how the problem of knowledge cannot be separated from our very human concerns.

In *Vermischte Bemerkungen* Wittgenstein writes thus:

I am by no means sure that I should prefer a continuation of my work by others to change in the way people live which would make all these questions superfluous. (For this reason I could never found a school. (Winch, P. trans. *Culture and Value*, Oxford, 1980).

Wittgenstein sounds here as if it would have been better, like Aristotle's God in *Metaphysics*, never to have suffered philosophical perplexity at all. In other words, it would be wonderful if we could live a life of God in which everything is complete, perfect and free from any type of change. But, if some of us, like Aristotle, yearn to have it both ways it means we cannot avoid the battles at our door.

According to Kal 'to know' and 'to think' are two different types of intellectual activities. Knowing, in his view, does not imply that there is any kind of process, as opposed to that thinking which contains some reference to change. So he comes to associate knowing with intuition and thinking with discursive activity. The point of



making a distinction between knowing and thinking is that the former enables us to make contact with reality whereas the latter just prepares the way to make this contact. However, thinking does not lead us to truth itself.<sup>7</sup>

While some identify intuition with knowing, like Kal, some identify it with contemplation, as Kahn does.<sup>8</sup> Kahn arrives at the conclusion that non-discursive thinking is not a possible form of thinking. Why he says what he says will be explained later on in Chapter V. According to him contemplation can take place after we grasp so-called knowledge of essences. Those who identify intuition with contemplation have enormous difficulty in explaining the relation between thinking and objects of thought. At this point I only wish to point out that neither the proponents nor the opponents of non-discursive thinking take account the fact that Aristotle describes human and divine thinking in terms of *energeia*.

Aristotle clearly states that thinking is *energeia* as opposed to *kinesis*.<sup>9</sup> If we follow Kal, then it seems to be possible to identify knowing with *energeia*. For knowing is not like cooking or building a house, a process which is incomplete.<sup>10</sup> However, Sorabji is also right in pointing out that this is said to be true only of certain kinds of thinking. For example, he says the process of proving a theorem surely does remain incomplete until the end but he also accepts that contemplating of a premise does not.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Non-Discursive Thinking versus Seeking

Aristotle describes the happiest and most pleasant life as one of knowing truths rather than seeking (*zetein*) them.<sup>12</sup> The reason, I believe, is obvious. For seeking is defined by reference to the aim of seeking. Seeking has no end or aim in itself. In other words, it is not intelligible without any aim. Until it reaches the aim, it is

incomplete and as such it is a sort of imperfect thinking activity (*kinetic* thinking activity). And this view was shared by some members at Plato's Academy, that contemplating knowledge is superior to seeking it.<sup>13</sup>

However, seeking cannot just be understood in terms of possessing truth. There is nothing to possess at the end of seeking. It leads us to understand, to contact reality. Is it true to say that Professor Hawking possesses knowledge of black holes at the end of his search? Sorabji also despises the idea of contemplating truth. Although it may be true that part of the pleasure of intellectual activity could be emerging from the state of perplexity as Aristotle says in *Metaphysics*,<sup>14</sup> it cannot be taken to mean that it is this process that should be praised or alone is to be enjoyed. For emerging from the state of perplexity means that we are nearer to the truth. Our excitement is not due to the process itself. And Sorabji is completely wrong in saying that Aristotle's God, who has always known and contemplated the truth, has missed this 'wonderful excitement' which we only enjoy.<sup>15</sup> God does not solve problems or puzzles; it is not in any need to experience the 'wonderful excitement' that we sometimes do. It is in eternal bliss. In a sense he praises the destructive nature of *kinesis* or he is unable to see the destructive aspect of *kinesis*. Our life cannot be seen as a very long motion. Actually his view on the subject is very popular and underlies today's attitude towards human life in general. For we are no longer interested merely in living or being happy but are always seeking it. So we do not see so many happy human individuals and happiness around us but a lot of human misery everywhere.

Aristotle, of course, is aware of the destructive nature of *kinesis* so he defines God in terms of *nous* and *energeia*. Thus it is essential to discover the relation between *nous* and *energeia* in Aristotle's thinking.<sup>16</sup>

I also believe that Aristotle would have been in agreement with Wittgenstein

rather than Sorabji who thinks that if we had been born in such a way, or been so educated that we never would have got into a state of perplexity, we would have missed the intellectual excitement. Sorabji suggests that we should perhaps distinguish three stages instead of two which could be stated as follows: (1) searching for truth; (2) finding it; (3) contemplating it.<sup>17</sup>

It is true that some philosophers find it (perplexity or searching) exciting and some others find it agonising. And for some the process of finding truth could provide a great satisfaction or the greatest pleasure of all. So when they have found a truth they want to tackle a new problem. Contemplation of what is known may become tedious. And in order not to become immensely bored they leave the result of their most rewarding activity behind. Plotinus was also very well aware of the last point. On his view this difficulty could only be obviated if we think of knowing as timeless.<sup>18</sup> But in Aristotle's view this is not the case, at least in the case of God. For God is that whose *ousia* is activity. It is what it is and does not suffer from the destructiveness of *kinesis* in any way. Its life is a life of *energeia*. Whereas for human beings, we are supposed to actualise our potential. It is this that saves *kinetic* thinking from being destructive, Aristotle's conception of non-discursive thinking or divine thinking as *energeia*. It is not worth much to have the capacity to lead a good life, but it is important to live a good life. So a person who has or is living the truth is superior to the one who mostly seeks for truth.

#### **4. On the Sameness of Intellect with Its Object**

Although it seems wrong, as well as somewhat misleading, to say that "the act of thinking is identical with its object" I do not have an alternative expression for it. Why I think that it is not appropriate is that it implies that there are two things, possibly



two different things.<sup>19</sup> And in any case this Aristotelian idea has proved hard for us to understand. Some philosophers have come to say that since it is such an obscure idea we should completely abandon it. Worse than this, some others have attempted to combat this somewhat notorious Aristotelian idea but have ended up in failure too. The reason for their failure is that they did not or could not give up the difference between thinking of A and A itself. They have always kept the propositional expression of A and the reality of A distinct from each other. The other reason for their failure is that they have not succeeded in understanding what Aristotle says of divine thinking which is described as eternal, unchangeable and matterless. Aristotle also argues that it thinks itself so there is no distinction between knowing and known. Although Aristotle states that human thinking has autonomy to think, it cannot be equated with the kind of thinking which does not depend on any objects of thoughts to think except itself. The reason for this seems to be that human thinking requires objects only for its first actualisation. It is autonomous with respect to its second actualisation. Since in God there is no unactualised potentiality, the question of actualisation does not arise. However, whether this is enough to establish a fundamental difference between human noetic activity and divine noetic activity remains to be seen.<sup>20</sup>

It has been argued that the idea of the identity of *nous* with its object comes from a discussion in *Physics* III.3 where Aristotle speaks of the relation between an agent and patient (by using the analogy of doctor and patient). He says that when a doctor tries to cure his patient, the activity of the doctor is identical with the activity of the patient. Although there are two parts, namely doctor and patient and curing and being cured, we can speak of the one single activity and this activity is located in the patient. We can look at another example, that of teacher and pupil, in the same way. According to Sorabji, in some sense Aristotle has an ulterior motive here because at the end of

*Physics* he aims to reach a conception of God which excludes any sort of change. I object to this by saying that the commonly held examples do not express Aristotle's theory of identity in thinking. Furthermore, they do not help in understanding the identity between knowing and known. For curing, learning or searching have nothing to do with thinking. With them, Aristotle simply describes a set of actions. So I believe that to concentrate on these examples cannot lead us to understand why he says what he says of God in terms of being identical with itself. In all other cases there are two things involved, but in the case of God there is only one.

Aristotle himself points out already that the identity spoken about here is not the identity of essence. He is very well aware that the essence of learning and teaching are quite different.<sup>21</sup> What he means by these examples is that there is one single activity.<sup>22</sup>

In the business of treatment the doctor is involved in the process as someone curing and the patient as someone being cured. However, curing itself constitutes a single activity.

In sum, there are not two different activities to be counted. Curing and being cured are predicated of a single activity. The identity is like that of the road from Thebes to Athens and the road from Athens to Thebes.<sup>23</sup>

When we turn to *De Anima*, we find the example of hearing. There Aristotle says that hearing and being heard can be thought as a single activity.<sup>24</sup> We are also told that the activity of thinking is identical with the object of thought. He explains it by saying that if you are thinking of a stone it is not that there is a stone in the soul but your thinking is identical with the intelligible form of the stone.<sup>25</sup> But we must remember that we think of a stone by the form of it. We do not touch on a stone or the reality of a stone.

It is very well known that the theory of identity in thinking presents us with a lot of difficulties, some of which can be expressed thus:



- 1 What kind of identity is it as far as thinking is concerned?
- 2 What are intelligible forms?
- 3 What are the objects of thought?

According to Aristotle when we think of something, the intelligible form of it must be present in the soul. For the soul is the place of forms. What we infer from this is that the act of thinking and the form that we think are one and the same thing. However, does this not prove a bit problematic? For example, if I think of a tree and if I call this tree X would I be able to claim that when I think of X something in my soul is identical with X? Or do I have any other way to think, perhaps, to intuit directly the intelligible form of the tree? Anscombe, in her attempt to explain the identity of the activity of thinking with its object, argues that there are not two distinct things here because if we wish to know whether a person understands a theorem, it is the theorem which we ask him/her to explain. According to her there is not such thing as the understanding of the understanding of the theorem.<sup>26</sup>

But I believe that we should not take all examples given by Aristotle in the same way. As far as the problem of thinking is concerned, it should be noted that Aristotle is essentially concerned to overcome the bridge between reality and the intellection of it by mind. I do not believe that Aristotle here talks of the kind of identity in thinking in terms of formal or representational identity or, as Anscombe claims, understanding of a theorem. I doubt whether understanding has anything to do with the theory. Aristotle probably would say that we should distinguish understanding a theorem from touching, knowing reality. For there is no such thing as the reality of a theorem. If my mind cannot be identical with realities in the world, does that mean that it can be identical with whatever it thinks?

I believe that because a form must be of something else either it must be



expressed propositionally or we must intuit it directly. As far as I know Aristotle nowhere ascribes to the human mind such a direct access to realities.<sup>27</sup> Thus the question arises once again about how we are supposed to understand the claim that when the mind thinks it is identical with its object. Although it has been said that the objects of human thinking can be essences or the intelligible forms of things and some have claimed that they are identity statements, none of these claims explains Aristotle's concern about the subject. For he says that either we can touch it or not. However, the metaphor of touch, I believe, itself expresses the difficulty with which the theory is faced.

Anscombe and Sorabji completely overlook what Aristotle says in *Metaphysics*, XII.7 and particularly 9. The examples they examine are not meant to explain the identity of thinking with its object. So they are wrong in relating the examples to the subject of thinking in Aristotle. They also do not take into account Aristotle's characterisation of thinking as *energeia*. Although they both recognise that Aristotle defines thinking in terms of *energeia* they make no attempt to examine the subject with this fact in mind.

Sorabji also treats Aristotle's conception of God no differently from his conception of human *nous* as if they were of the same nature. So he cannot say much about the statement that "God is what it is, because it thinks itself".<sup>28</sup> I believe that when Aristotle defines God in terms of *nous* and *energeia* he illuminates what he means by saying that "the *nous* is identical with its object".<sup>29</sup> Therefore book XII.9 of *Metaphysics* does not only serve our theological concern on the whole but explains what Aristotle's view is of the identity of *nous* with its objects of thought. What I claim here is that the theory of thinking cannot merely be confined to the Aristotle's account of thinking in *De Anima*.

The thesis which postulates the identity of intellect with its object is central to Aristotle's account of thinking. It is not put forward just as an alternative to Plato's theory of ideas as it is claimed by some philosophers.<sup>30</sup> After all Aristotle is not interested in making the object of thought eternally unchangeable concepts. For in Aristotle the objects of thought are not placed within the intellect except as the forms of things. In *De Anima* Aristotle is interested in explaining how human intellect works. He does not speak there in Platonic or Neo-Platonic ways.

Now let us have a close look at what we are told in *De Anima*. When the mind has become each thing it is then in a position to think at its disposal. But it is still in a state of potentiality in some way but not in the same way as before it learned or discovered. And then it can think by itself (*autos di auton*).<sup>31</sup> The identity cannot be between a thinker and his/her thought but between his/her mind and what he/she thinks.

One also has to identify his/her being only in terms of his/her sole intellect or just being an intellect. For a thinker is more than what he thinks with. There is nothing to prevent an individual human *nous* thinking of the worst things and being identical with them. However, divine *nous* thinks itself, which is the highest thing. Another point is that what a thinker may be thinking of does not require a complete thought. Let me try to explain what I mean by this: suppose that there is a scientist who works or has been working on something. Until he/she solves the problem with which he/she is concerned, he/she cannot be said to have a thought with which his/her mind is said to be identical. This also shows that *kinetic* thinking forms a part of human noetic activity too. The identity of mind with its object is possible if and only if the object of thought is complete.<sup>32</sup> Williams says that: "Surely the point is that what a thinker thinks with", i.e. *nous*, is, in the human case, a *dynamis*, a capacity. The thinker is that whose capacity it is. In God's case, since *nous* here is never unactualised, it exists as *energeia*.



at all times, and can thus be identified with itself. He goes further by pointing out that:

there is no such thing as an incomplete thought. Surely the scientist has (complete) thoughts all the time while he is solving the problem: the thoughts may be embodied in questions, hypotheses, dilemmas etc., but will always be propositions or complexes of propositions.<sup>33</sup>

However, one cannot identify one's mind with something which is developing, changing, or in constant flux. For example, X might have been concerned with the question of Y for a long time but as soon as X solved the puzzle, X had a thought which was complete and perfect. But the thought X had also explains the physical world, it reflects the physical world. But it is doubtful whether we could say that X's thought of Y could be described as *energeia* in the primary sense of the term. This also requires the discussion of essences in Aristotle. Whatever we say about the nature of beings in Aristotle, one thing is indisputable, that the objects of thought in human thinking do not and cannot enjoy the privilege of the object of divine thought. Aristotle strongly believes that there is internal and essential relationship between the object of thought and thinking. The status of object of thought determines the quality of thinking itself.<sup>34</sup>

So human noetic activity may appear to be identical with divine noetic activity but it is hard to conceive human *nous* to be identical with divine *nous*. For, although we are granted autonomy in thinking, this autonomy in thinking is somewhat dependent on things which are external to our mind. Suppose that I discovered the essential nature of Venus. But one day it has just disappeared. Would I be able to say that I can think of Venus at my will and have autonomy for thinking of Venus at my disposal? In addition to this, there are serious problems with seeing human *nous* as incorruptible substance.

God is identical with itself necessarily because it thinks itself. Its being is eternal. There is direct and necessary correspondence between the ontological status of God and what he thinks. Thus Aristotle cannot find any other thing to be thought by God, so he makes God think itself. So Aristotle's conception of divine noetic activity



may not essentially be the same as human noetic activity. A is the same as B only when A thinks B. The distinction is important, for it only applies to the human mind and not to the divine mind. I believe Aristotle is profoundly aware of this fact that a scientist cannot put the knowledge of the world into his/her mind. What he/she discovers or possesses as knowledge is and must be incomplete in two senses:

1. What we have as a piece of knowledge, say B, does not give us reality as a whole.
2. Our knowledge of reality is incomplete.

This is why we cannot be identified with what we think but just our mind with what it thinks. And as such it is not necessarily of the highest things.<sup>35</sup>

Norman argues, in his article called 'Aristotle's Philosopher - God', that the identity of intellect with its object is possible if and only if it is taken to hold between the *noetikon* and *noema*. Professor C.F. Williams says that the intellect (*nous*, *noetikon*) is a *dynamis*. The actualisation of this *dynamis* is a *noema*. It is the *noema* which is said to be identical with the actualisation of the *noeton*.<sup>36</sup> Norman appears to be right at first glance. For Aristotle says that the object of thought is in the mind and it seems to be perfectly plausible to say that *noemata* are in the intellect. But Wedin objects to this by pointing out that the identity of mind with its object is a relation between intellect and its object. More importantly it is the fact that Aristotle is concerned with how one is able to think of a thing outside oneself. And the object of thought is not itself a thought. To claim the opposite is to reduce Aristotle's theory of thinking to a bad copy of Plato's theory of Ideas. For mind thinks external reality only through the forms of them. And the form of a thing in our soul does not represent anything except the thing itself. It might be made clearer if we look at what Aristotle says about perception. For Aristotle also applies "the identity thesis" to perception. He

says in *De Anima* at 431b 26 - 432a 1 that:

In the soul that which can perceive and that which can know are potentially those: on the one hand, the object of knowledge (*to episteton*), on the other, the object of perception (*to aistheton*). These must be either the things themselves or their forms (*ta eîde*). But clearly they are not the things because it is not the stone but its form that is in the soul.

What we understand from the passage just quoted is that the things in perception are external. So it is true to say that it is the form of an object that is in the soul when perception takes place but not the thing itself. And it is also true for objects of thought in so far as they are without matter. Aristotle tells us in *De Anima* III.4, 430a 6-8 that objects of thought (*ta noeta*) exist potentially in things with matter. For *nous* is just the potentiality to become actualised with such things without matter. So it is the task of *nous* to grasp the form of things without their matter. But what are the matterless forms? He says that they are essences and *energeia*.<sup>37</sup>

What seems to be certain, at least, is that thinking and perception differ very little from the point of view just discussed above. And this brings back the question, do perception and thinking differ from each other fundamentally?<sup>38</sup> Aristotle speaks of the objects of thought as being matterless. So the identity theory applies to things which do not have matter. As I have pointed out before Aristotle's thesis on the identity of *nous* with its object cannot be confined to the version of *De Anima*, namely, human thinking.

What we see in *De Anima* is the application of Aristotle's theory of identity to human thinking.

When Aristotle, however, speaks of the objects of thought he means the objects of thought as existing in some material (sensible) objects. And that would be in agreement with *De Anima* III.8 that the objects of thought are given by the forms of sensible things. Although they are in the soul, they are not themselves the objects of perception but they are the objects of thought.

Thus, when Aristotle says that *nous* is a capacity for being such objects without



their matter, we can draw the conclusion that *nous* is the potentiality which becomes identical with the form of things in the soul without the matter. But how does that differ from perception?

It appears that in perception the form which is placed in the mind requires mentioning matter. For it is essential to mention the *aistheton*. However, it is not necessary for thinking. According to Aristotle, perception has also a limited range of objects whereas *nous* can think everything. But I believe the last clause requires our attention. What does everything mean? If it means essences, what are essences?

The mind becomes identical with its object without matter. So the mention of matter becomes unnecessary. Since what activated or brings the mind into activity, the *noeton* is itself without matter. So matter has no role to play in the activity of mind itself. In other words, matter does not have any function in explaining how the intellect thinks.

## 5. On Perceptibles and Thinkables

We must understand as true generally of every sense (1) that sense is that which is receptive of the form of sensible objects without the matter, just as the wax receives the impression of the signet ring without the iron or the gold, and receives the impression of the gold or bronze, but not as gold or bronze; so in every case sense is affected by that which has colour, or flavour, or sound, but by it, not qua having a particular identity, but qua having a certain quality, and in virtue of its formula; (2) the sense organ in its primary meaning is that in which this potentiality lies. The organ and the potentiality are identified as one thing but their essential nature is not the same. The sentient subject must be extended; they are a kind of ratio and potentiality of the said subject. From this it is also clear why excess in the perceptibility of objects



destroys the sense organs; for if the excitement of the sense organ is too strong, the ratio of its adjustment (which, as we saw, constitutes the sense) is destroyed; just as the adjustment and pitch of a lyre is destroyed when the strings are struck hard. It is also clear why plants do not feel, though they have one part of the soul, and are affected to some extent by objects touched, for they show both cold and heat; the reason is that they have no mean, i.e. no first principle such as to receive the form of sensible objects, but are affected by the matter at the same time as the form. (De Anima II.12 424 a 17-b 3)

It seems that Aristotle has made it difficult to draw a very sharp distinction between sensation and thinking. It is also true of sensible forms and intelligible forms. According to Aristotle sensation is the power to receive sensible forms, for example colour, sound, without matter. The faculty of sense and its organs the same but their essence remains to be different. Although an eye is a *syntheton*, a seeing eye is one thing. Sensation requires a material organ which is constructed to be acted on in this way by the object perceived. And this potentiality is activated in and during the actual sensation.

However, the simile of wax and the metal seal appears to herald a materialistic theory for Aristotle. Nevertheless the real issue here is to show the possibility of receiving a form of something without its matter. To understand the simile otherwise is to import a crude materialism into his psychology. The imprinting of the seal on the wax is an event which requires a direct contact between the two objects. That is why this cannot be conceived as a complete parallel to what happens in sensation. The faculty of sight does not become red in perceiving redness. The organ of sight becomes informed in this material way. However, Aristotle keeps the difference between the physical alteration of the sense-organ, which is necessary precondition of

sensation, and sensation itself. This also explains why plants do not have sensation (424 a 32 b-3 and compare 438 a 5 ff)

The conclusion to be drawn here is that what is perceived in the act of sensation is form, something non-material. However, in the case of sensation, the object of sensation must be present. Explaining how, in sensation, the form gets into A's soul requires mention of matter because the *aistheton* is essential to the causal story. However this is not so for thinking. Here the intellect is able to be the same as its object independently of matter. For what brings the intellect to activity, the *noeton*, is itself without matter. Although the object of thought is always the form of a material object, matter will play no role in explaining how the intellect is able to think the object on a given occasion.

Perception and thought are alike in a number of ways. They are both faculties that have active exercises. The objects of thought and sensation have causal role in explaining how thinking and sensation happen. However, there are differences between intelligible and sensible forms which can be stated as the following:

1. There is the necessity of bodily organs as mediators between sensible forms and the soul whereas this is not true of intelligible form. He says that the sensible form is more intimately connected with matter in that it is confined to a particular kind of matter. Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* that there is, for example, differences between snubness and concavity. For what is snub is a concave nose but concavity has an element of sensible matter. The snub is conjoined with matter, in this instance flesh. it is perceived by the soul in sensation, but to have knowledge of concavity the soul must proceed by itself to higher levels of generalisation.

2. When the organ of sight becomes coloured, the soul becomes aware of colour.

Thus the awareness signifies reception of form, an immaterial essence. Aristotle



says in *Posterior Analytics* that although what is perceived is an individual, sense-perception is of the universal (100 a 16-b 1). However, sensation does not necessarily provide the universal. This time the example comes from *Analytics* too and is of 'man'. Nevertheless this does not mean that we can have knowledge of the species without going beyond the perception of individual men. *Episteme* enables us to define and in order to acquire that the soul must go beyond sensation. (87 b 8)

## 6. The Objects of Thought

It is obvious that the discussion of the objects of thought is indispensable to the thesis which claims the identity of intellect with its object. As I have said on several occasions the discussion of the subject cannot be confined to either *De Anima* or *Metaphysics*. To do this, will only enable one to show how Aristotle is inconsistent in one place with what he says on the subject in another. Instead of this, I propose that we should consider the application of the thesis with regard to both human and divine thinking. Then, perhaps we might be in a position to say whether Aristotle grants human beings non-discursive thinking or not. For, while everyone appears to be content to attribute it to divine being, there is vast disagreement among scholars today of the possibility of non-discursive thinking for humans. But I just would like to mention briefly that both opponents and proponents of non-discursive thinking overlook the fact that Aristotle did not have the conception of intuition. Thus there might be some other explanation of his theory of thinking in addition to discursive and non-discursive ones.

If to think is not the same as to be thought, in respect of which does goodness belong to thought? For being is not the same for the act of thinking and the object of thinking. It is one thing to be the act of thinking and another to be what is thought. The answer is that in some cases the knowledge is the object. In productive sciences, if we disregard the matter, the substance, ie, the essence, is the object; but in the speculative sciences the formula or the act of thinking is the object. Therefore, since thought and the object of thought are not different in the case of things which contain no



matter, they will be the same, and the act of thinking will be one with the object of thought.<sup>39</sup>

It is very dubious in what sense we can say that A's intellect is identical with B and B is without matter. Sorabji and Wedin avoid saying what 'B' refers to and they do not get into trouble, but at the same time they do not say anything about the theory of the identity of the intellect with its object.<sup>40</sup>

First of all Aristotle nowhere states that identity but even thinking and thought is of formal identity. We must describe what B is. Aristotle does not think of formal identity. It is therefore important to explain what we mean by B or C or D as object of thought.

In order to overcome the difference between the intellect and the object of thought, the latter one must be changeless. For, nothing in the process of change can be a candidate for being object of thought. Can anyone identify his/her mind with something in motion? I do not believe they can. For, the identity of intellect with its object is possible only so long as the object of intellect is motionless.

So we are forced to speak of the essence of B or whatever else we think with. So it is just not enough to say that A's intellect is identical with B which is without matter. So to take the identity of the intellect with its object formal identity is to completely undermine what Aristotle says on the subject (See section on Plotinus).

But when we say that A's mind is identical with B which is without matter, at least one thing is made clear, namely that the identity thesis cannot be extended to something which includes matter. And that amounts to this: the object of thought cannot be understood in terms of *kinesis* but *energeia*, since Aristotle identifies thinking with *energeia* as opposed to motion. But how are we supposed to understand the discussion of incomposite objects? What is the nature of incomposite objects?

Aristotle appears to be extending his theory of thinking to incomposite objects.

So the subject of *De Anima* III.6 is of indivisible or undivided objects. According to him the indivisible object does not involve combination or separation. It appears to be quite plausible to say that indivisible objects are incomposite objects. Because they are meant to be motionless. Thus, if the identity thesis applies to indivisible objects it must be so for incomposite objects too (see Chapter V, section 5).

It is interesting to see that the concept of an indivisible object is introduced after *De Anima* III.5 where Aristotle states that thinking is impossible without *nous poietikos*. Further, it makes everything actual. But what are these things that it makes actual?

In Aristotle's view if something does not have matter it is also undivided.<sup>41</sup> This also applies to the human mind. We are told in *De Anima* III.6 that thinking of an undivided object cannot be false. He ends the chapter by saying that the kind of thought which does not affirm one thing of another is always true. For the knowledge of undivided objects is the knowledge of the essence and it is without matter. The object of thought as such is complete and we are told that forms are *energeia*. Therefore thinking of undivided objects cannot be expressed propositionally. Aristotle intends to overcome the gap between reality and intellect, so the undivided objects of thought are meant to be reflecting reality. For matter means potentiality, imperfection, incompleteness, change. What Aristotle tries to achieve by claiming that the undivided objects of thought are matterless is to be able to define the identity of intellect with its object in terms of *energeia*. So we are here to see the identity of thinking (*energeia*) with its object which is defined in terms of *energeia* as well.

Therefore we cannot talk here of formal identity or reduce the object of thought merely to a thought. Aristotle says that those born blind are to be said to have some sort of discursive reasoning about colours. However, they lack the capacity to come into contact with colour. So they cannot experience the reality of colours whatever sort of



reasoning they might have.<sup>42</sup>

## 7. On the Possibility of Non-Discursive Thought

I have raised my doubts about the sameness of divine *noetic* activity with human *noetic* activity. It is true that they are both described to be *energeia*. However, is that enough to claim that they are both identical? If not should we give up any possibility of non-discursive thinking of human thinking? Sorabji and Lloyd question any conception of non-discursive thinking in Aristotle and ask why we should presume that Aristotle had in mind the non-propositional contemplation of isolated concepts in the first place. (Sorabji, 1982, 296 ff and Lloyd 1981)

Aristotle speaks of *ta prota noemata* in *De Anima* III.8 (432 a 10-14). What are they? How are we supposed to understand them? Nussbaum related *ta prota noemata* to *Metaphysics* IX.10 and regard them to be the discussion of the simplest and most basic things (*asuntheta*). However, in particular, we need to clarify what counts as an instance of such a thought. We are told in *Metaphysics* at 1051 b 30-32 that concerning what is strictly being activity, it is impossible to be in error. We simply think them or we do not think them. The point is that in both cases thoughts are not combined. Thus propositional truth and falsity cannot be applied to these thoughts. Nevertheless, Aristotle argues that we can investigate the nature of (*ti esti*) of such things. He writes that:

An assertion that says something about something (*ti kata tinos*), as does an affirmation, is true or false. But this is not the case for all thought; thought of the nature (*ti esti*) of the essence (of a thing) (*kata to ti einai*) is true but does not say something about something (*ou ti kata tinos*). But just as perceiving a special object is true, while perceiving that the white thing is a man or not is not always true, so also with what is without matter. (430 b 26-31)

Is there any conflict between *Metaphysics* IX.10 and *De Anima* 930 b 26-31?



The former implies that it is possible to think of *asuntheta* without thinking of their essence or nature. If this is the case how could it be possible to inquire into the nature of such things? However, the passage from De Anima argues that it is possible to think of the nature of such things but it is wrong to say that one is thinking of something about something. Therefore propositional truth and falsity are both inapplicable to thought of an object *simpliciter* and to thought the nature of its essence. The first appears to refer *Metaphysics* 1051 b 24 where Aristotle considers thinking under the notion of truth as contact (*thigein*). What guarantees truth here is grasping the object in itself. This sense of truth corresponds to perception in which perceiving or special object of perception is said to be always true. (De Anima 427 b 11) The point is that in this kind of thinking there is a direct acquaintance with the object as in the case of perceiving a proper object of sense. However, in the case of that where propositional truth and falsity is said to be inapplicable appears to correspond to *Metaphysics* 1051 b 24-25 in which Aristotle speaks of the concept of truth as assertibility. He distinguishes assertion from affirmation in which one thing is predicted of another. It does not seem to be easy to construe the notion of truth in terms of assertibility. Nevertheless one cannot be wrong in successful assertion of the nature of the essence. It is this that guarantees truth.

In the light of what has been said so far it seems that thought about essence will be considered as thought about an uncombined object (*asuntheta*). And it would be possible to take the primary thoughts as expressing a thing's essence if truth and falsity are equated with combination of thought (432 a 1014).

The view of primary thoughts as presented above contains two difficulties which are:

a) How do they differ from images?

b) Affirmation and denial are not denied to imagination - are they denied to assertion?

Through meeting these difficulties it seems to be possible to establish that primary thoughts are not propositional. The first difficulty can be overcome by saying that primary thoughts are to be thought in terms of 'contact'. In *Metaphysics* IX.10 Aristotle contrasts affirmation and denial with assertion of what is not combined (*asuntheta*). He contrasts the same pair with what does not assert something in *De Anima* 420 b 26-31. This affirmation and assertion are definitely opposed to each other.

c) Imagination accepts denial and affirmation. However, imagination is contrasted with assertion and denial. Through retaining the notion of truth as presented in *Metaphysics* 1051 b 24-25. *De Anima* passage (432 a 10-14) can be understood not only contrasting imagination with thoughts corresponding to affirmation and denial but also with these corresponding to assertion of a thing's essence. Thus it becomes plausible to say that there are thoughts which are to be known as truth through the notion of contact. The primary thoughts do not involve propositions.

The question to be answered now is this: what is primary about these primary thoughts? It might be said that 'primary' refers to 'logically' primary. If we look at *De Interpretatione* we find that it is possible to restrict assertion and denial to single assertions and denials in which one thing is asserted or denied of another thing. In other words a single assertion is one in which one thing is said of one thing (18 a 13 ff). For instance, being a man is one thing while this implies being a two-footed animal. However, being a tall man is not one but two things. There are two assertions in saying that David is a tall man which are: a) David is tall; b) David is a man. The account of primary thoughts as presented here allows that thoughts can be combined in a single assertion. The primary thoughts are the elements of such assertions.



It appears that AC Lloyd and Sarabji do not agree with any non-propositional interpretation of primary thought. For them this is equal to saddling Aristotle with an enigma of Greek philosophy, namely, with non-discursive thinking. They are both concerned with any thought that involves contemplating something without thinking anything about it.

Aristotle's account of non-discursive thinking is mainly contained in (Metaphysics IX.10, 1051 b 27-1052 a 4 and De Anima III.6, 430 b 26-31). It is usually rendered that non-discursive thinking requires contemplating things in isolation. On the contrary in discursive thinking one's intellect shifts from A to B. In this type of thinking shifting from A to B indicates that there is change in discursive thinking. It has also been argued that it necessitates something to be contemplated in isolation.

Sorabji argues against any possibility of non-discursive thinking not only in Aristotle but in Plotinus with which I will be concerned in the Chapter VII. He says that it is impossible to claim that one thinks of something in isolation without thinking anything of it. Let us take a sentence in which one says that 'beauty is truth'. According to Sorabji it is hard to argue that a person can think of 'beauty' without thinking anything about it before one connects the concept of 'beauty' to truth. In addition to that he rejects any possibility of interrupted thinking in Aristotle. However, it is well known that Aristotle conceives non-discursive *noetic* activity as one of the loftiest achievements of a person and the continuous activity of divine *nous*. (Metaphysics XII.7, 1072 b 14-26; Nicomachean Ethics X.8). And non-discursive *noetic* activity is compared with touching (Metaphysics IX.10, 1051 b 24-25; XII 1072 b 21).

What is so lofty about interrupted thinking? Why do we have to regard contemplation as one of the loftiest achievements of human *noetic* activity? How



could it lead us to truth as Aristotle says? It should be remembered that non-discursive *noetic* activity is the only way to contact reality and truth is nothing more than knowing reality. That is why Aristotle argues that there is no truth nor falsity in non-discursive *noetic* activity. If this is the case Sorabji is right in saying that there is no question of truth and error unless one combines concepts (De Anima, II.6, 430 a 22-b 6; Categories 2 a 7-10; De Interpretatione 16 a 9-18). He is also right in asking whether non-discursive *noetic* activity is to be called thinking or something else. This is also the question I will consider in the section on Plotinus. But here it can briefly be noted that Islamic Aristotelians appear to have followed Plotinus in their conception of non-discursive activity of the individual human being rather than Aristotle. In their views achieving the non-discursive state of knowing required a long discursive preparation. For instance, non-discursive understanding of beauty is contained in the discursive thinking that 'beauty is truth'.

It is not easy to understand how one could relate the analogy of non-discursive thinking to the contemplation of isolated concepts. Aristotle states that in this kind of thinking nothing is predicted of another thing (*ti kata tinos*; De Anima III.6, 430 b 28) nor-asserted (*kataphasis*; Metaphysics IX.10, 1051<sup>b</sup>24). It would be useful if one bears in mind that Aristotle as well as Plotinus describes *nous* as life. It seems that this crucial point has been completely overlooked. It is possible that after all Aristotle and Plotinus may not have had in their mind non-discursive *noetic* activity as something thinking in the ordinary sense of the term as we are today. It is also possible that non-discursive *noetic* activity does not necessarily correspond to contemplation in Aristotle as well as in Plotinus.

With this view in mind let us once again return to the discussion of non-discursive *noetic* activity as one of the loftiest achievements of the individual. Engaging in non-

discursive *noetic* activity involves knowing the essence. However one should be careful here about identifying the essences with the defining characteristic of things. The account of science given in Posterior Analytics is that one knows the definitions of things and by which one can explain the things concerned further. But in *De Anima* 430 a 25. b 9. the form of a thing is defined in relation to the function of a thing. It might be suggested that in this case the aim of the individual human being as a *noetic* subject to realize his/her *noetic* potential, since this is what it is to be a human being.

Aristotle speaks of *asuntheta* at 1051 b 17 and *adiaireta* at 430 a 26. It seems that these things do not involve matter nor form. Now one needs to be careful here. If the identity of the intellect is taken to be between intellect and reality it is not difficult to understand the analogy of touch. Aristotle says that in the case of sensation of special sense objects there is no error. In sensation sensing and sensed are identical. This is also true of non-discursive thinking. For in this type of thinking knowing and known are the same thing. That is why either you perceive or not or you think or not. But there arises a problem if one takes Aristotle to be speaking of definitions of these subjects (*ti esti*, 1051 b 26; b 32; 430 b 28)

For then non-discursive *noetic* activity seems to involve contemplating the definitions of incomposite subjects. As it is rightly pointed out by Sorabji then thinking is bound to be propositional. For it will involve thinking that such and such an essence belongs to such and such a subject. And this will be equal to saying that there is assertion and predication of something else. The close relation which according to Aristotle exists between logic and reality is a theme in itself.

The objection has been put forward against any possibility of non-discursive *noetic* activity by Sorabji and Lloyd. It can be met by saying that Aristotle considers definitions as statements of identity. What this means is that in these sorts of



statements one thing is not predicated of another. This identity statements are neither assertions nor predications. (1030 a 2-6; 1030 a 10-14). The view is based on what Aristotle says in Posterior Analytics and Metaphysics (73 b 5-10; 83-32; 1087 a 35; 1088 a 28). Aristotle says that it is by being something other than a white thing that a man is white. However, it is not by being something other than animal that he is an animal. Although being white is predicated of an individual man as one thing or another but man is not predicated of an individual man as one thing of another (1030 a 2-6; 10-14). Aristotle also speaks of subject which has neither matter nor form (*suneil emmenon tei hulei*, 1037 a 33-b 7). And he says that in this case the subject is identical with its essence. On the question of how they are thought Aristotle says that in thinking of them we cannot be mistaken. Either we know them or we do not know them (*thigein, thinganein*, 1051 b 24-33). The analogy of contact in relation to incomposite objects is interesting in a number of ways. Firstly of all it is an all or nothing relation. Secondly, it requires a direct relation with the things that one knows. In this respect it is important to remember the comparison between perception of special sense objects and incomposite things. In both cases there are no falsity or truth.

Now we have seen that accounts given on non-discursive *noetic* activity are not without difficulties including the one given by Sorabji. However, the interpretation of primary thoughts presented at the beginning appears to eliminate the difficulties that previous views carry with them. After all it is argued that one can speak of non-discursive thoughts in Aristotle. Sorabji, however, argues that the thought of *asuntheta* and *adiaireta* of *De Anima* III.6 must be propositional after all.

Although Sorabji's view might appeal to many who deny any sensible conception of non-discursive thinking in Aristotle nevertheless his account is not without



difficulties. Sorabji's view on non-discursive thinking is based on the passages from *Posterior Analytics* (73 b 5-10 and 73b 9-10). In the first passage Aristotle says that what is not predicated of a subject is to be described essential and what is so predicated to be called as incidental. It might appear at first that this is enough to think that Sorabji is right in maintaining his view on the subject that non-propositional thinking is propositional. However, the line refers back to 73 b 5 where it is said that 'what is not predicated of some other subject'. It is not clear that Aristotle has in his mind identity statements. For instance think that A stands for a plane figure and B for a triangle. The corresponding essential statement would be this: 'A triangle is a plane figure'. It is obvious that this can hardly be construed as referring to the same thing twice. The second passage used by Sorabji comes from *Posterior Analytics* 1.22 in which he sees support for the identity statements. The important lines are translated by Mure as follows: "Predicates which signify substance signify that the subject is identical with the predicate or on species of the predicate" (Mure, 1932, *Posterior Analytics* 83 a 24-25).

However, Wedin objects his translation of the passage and argues that the passage yields something different. 83 a 30) exemplifies that 'Man is precisely animal' and, bearing in mind that this is contrasted with what is said at 83 a 31-32 with analogies, for the case of incidental predication. He claims that 'Man is precisely animal' is not the same as 'Man is precisely a sort of animal'. The point is that the sentences like 'Man is precisely animal' do not yield to identity statements, but at most, statements such as 'Man is animal' or 'Triangle is a plane figure'. In addition to this 83 a 21-23 states that accidental and essential predications are cases where one thing is predicated of another. Of course this is in conflict with *De Anima* III.6 where Aristotle insists that thought of incompounds in composites is not *ti kata tinous*. Thus

Sorabji might be right in maintaining that statements of definitions are identities, this cannot be holding to be true in the cases of thinking an incomposite (Wedin, 1988, 129 ff).

It is also difficult to argue that Aristotle considers definition as involving predication. These do not involve statements which express that a such and such is. In these cases Aristotle refers to *definiens*. We are told in *Posterior Analytics* that in definition (*en tou horismou*) one thing is not predicated of another. For instance, not animal of being two-footed nor it of animal; nor even figure of plane. For plane is not figure nor figure plane. (*Posterior Analytics* II.3, 90 6 34-38). We find the same thing in *De Interpretatione* at 17 a 11-15. What this indicates is that it is after all possible to speak of non-propositional sense of definition in Aristotle. This also appears to be the case in *De Anima* III.6 where Aristotle discusses undifferentiated objects of thought.

In *De Anima* III.6 Aristotle considers a certain type of object of thought. We are told in *De Anima* III.8 that thoughts must be combinable in judgements which yield truth and falsity. There are two things to be clarified here: a) combinability, b) denial of falsity to the incomposite objects (1051361). Let us consider an example given by Wedin.

d) The flower in the vase is a daffodil.

e) Daffodils are bulbous herbs. (Wedin 1988, 131).

The point is that since thoughts are combinable in essence, incomposite objects can be thought of only in combination with others. What this means is that one can only think of daffodils so long as the *noema* daffodil occurs in a proposition. Now the question that arises is this: why does Aristotle deny truth and falsity to such thoughts? Sorabji suggests that the solution to the question may lie in a special type of combining,



namely, in identity statements.

However, this is not without difficulties. For in order to combine the thoughts in the case of a) we must know or be acquainted with the thoughts themselves. Knowing is an all-or-nothing affair with the *noema* in question. However, now the question to be considered how could we eliminate the risk of error from thought of the incomposites? Let us think that somebody wrongly identifies daffodil with tulip. After taking all possible measures to eliminate any deficiency on the side of knower, we told him/her that it was daffodil. In a sense this would be connecting an error in judgement.

However, suppose that after taking all possible measures the knower insists that daffodil is tulip. In this case it is not right to say that the knower made a mistake in judgement. For mistakes in judgements require that one knows the concepts or thoughts which are contained in the judgement. The only explanation one can give is that the knower does not know what daffodils are. Thus the possibility of making any mistake does not arise on the side of the knower. For the knower is not even able to make a mistake. Aristotle would say that the knower has failed to hit the object at all.

This will allow to accommodate the immunity of incomposite thoughts from error while they are stated in a propositional context. In other words one does not have to construe incomposite thoughts as propositional. And this has nothing to do with contemplation of concepts in isolation. In other words non-discursive *noetic* activity does not necessarily need to be restricted to contemplation. This is what Aristotle appears to suggest in *Metaphysics* at 1051b18 – 21.<sup>43</sup>

## 8. Conclusion

The discussion of non-discursive thinking comes mainly from two chapters, one is from *Metaphysics* IX.10<sup>43</sup> and one is from *De Anima* III.6.<sup>44</sup> It has been generally held



that non-discursive thinking involves thinking things without thinking anything about them.

In thinking, for example, that beauty is truth, my intellect switches from beauty to truth, so this would be one example of discursive thinking. However, even in this case of discursive thinking transition is from concept to concept and that implies contemplation of something in isolation. It could be objected to this that there can be a stage at which my intellect is thinking beauty without yet having passed to truth. However, this seems to be impossible for I promptly relate it to the concept of truth. But if I was put in an unconscious state by something else before I had done so, I might have thought of beauty in isolation. But then I am not in a position to know that I am thinking of anything.

Is it possible to think of beauty without going on to think something of beauty? I might only desire to know, for example, what the attributes of beauty are. I do not think that Aristotle is concerned with interrupted thinking. He regards non-discursive thinking as one of the supreme achievements of the human being in its happiest moments. But God is always in this state and does not suffer from any slight distraction.<sup>45</sup> And non-discursive thinking is compared with touching.<sup>46</sup> And as such it also excludes any sort of contemplation. Contemplation is always contemplation of reality but not reality itself. That is why Aristotle finds no way but to say that non-discursive thinking is like touching. Touching is always to touch something, to contact something. What could there be to touch apart from the thing that one touches?

Sorabji argues that it is difficult to see how thinking something in isolation, i.e. without thinking anything about it could be thought as leading us to truth. But in *De Anima* III.6 and (430b 28) in *Metaphysics* IX.10 (1051b 24) Aristotle does in fact try to prove that this kind of thinking, namely non-discursive thinking, leads us to truth. He also says that there is no falsehood if we do not combine concepts.<sup>47</sup>

In the case of human thinking it might be said against the notion of being knocked

unconscious that, although the non-discursive thinking of beauty is contained in the discursive thinking that beauty is truth, nevertheless it does not occur on its own. But in Plotinus and in Aristotle as well, this has importance in the definition of the thinking of God (God's thinking). They both believe that non-discursive thinking can occur without discursive thinking. In Aristotle it is especially true in the case of God. Nevertheless Sorabji does not think that this new suggestion enables us to make any improvement on the side of non-discursive thinking. He goes further and asks why only having the concept of beauty in mind is to be thought as a very supreme achievement or a case of having truth. 'Supremeness' and 'truth' could have any meaning if and only if non-discursive thinking provides us with a full understanding of beauty. But according to him understanding must be propositional since understanding entails appreciating that so-and-so is the case. Perhaps we should think of two kinds of non-discursive activity, namely human non-discursive noetic activity and divine non-discursive activity. For, in the case of God, Aristotle never states that it thinks of concepts or anything else in isolation. But in the case of human thinking he says that in non-discursive thinking we do not predicate anything of anything (*De Anima* III.6, 430b 28). He also says in *Metaphysics* that there is no assertion of anything else in non-discursive thinking.<sup>48</sup> However, I reject any conception of non-discursive thinking in the way that I have just discussed above (see Chapter V).

Aristotle claims that one of the loftiest achievements for a human being is to be engaged in theoretical science which involves discovering the essences. In the two chapters mentioned at the beginning, Aristotle speaks of objects which are incomposite (*asuntheta*) (*Metaphysics* 1051b 17) and *adiaireta* (*De Anima* 430 a 26). And we have said that they do not involve any matter whatsoever. The reference here is to 'what it is' (*ti esti*, 1051b 26; b 32) and to 'what it is in respect of essence' (*ti esti kata to ti en einai*, 430b 28). However, thinking means here having in one's thought the definitions of incomposite



objects. However, this is impossible because in that case the thinking must be propositional. For it involves thinking that such-and-such an essence belongs to such-and-such a subject. Some definitely reject the view that definitions can be stated in a non-discursive way.<sup>49</sup>

It is claimed that Aristotle occasionally views definitions as being statements of identity. In these statements we do not predicate one thing of another. Aristotle sometimes speaks of statements such as these, which give the essence of something, or part of its essence. He says in *Posterior Analytics* that it is by being something other than a pale thing that a man is pale. However, it is not by being something other than an animal that he is an animal. Although pale is here predicated of an individual human being as one thing of another, being human is not predicated of a human being as one thing of another.<sup>50</sup>

And Aristotle also says in *Metaphysics* VII.11, 1037a 33-67 that an object which is incomposite and does not have matter is identical with its essence. But most importantly, Aristotle claims that in non discursive thinking we cannot be mistaken; either we can touch or not.<sup>51</sup> Aristotle means that if we try to state what the essence of an incomposite object is and fail, we are not in any error. For, in that case we have not succeeded in talking about the object at all. We have not been in any contact with it, because contact or touching is an all-or-nothing affair. Plato also claims that one cannot be mistaken about some certain identity statements. According to him no-one has ever said to himself that a horse is an ox.<sup>52</sup> Plato and Aristotle both use a tactual metaphor which is that of grasping.<sup>53</sup>

Thus discursive interpretation of *De Anima* III.6 cannot be maintained. He there distinguishes the operations of the *nous* which are intellection of 'indivisibles' from the combination of concepts produced by intellection. Aristotle says that the former is free from errors. In other words, it is always true while the latter can be either true or false.<sup>54</sup> And in the case of the 'indivisibles', Aristotle states that not only realities that are potentially



indivisible for example, those which cannot be divided at all can be perceived as such, but also realities that are indivisible only in actuality for example, those which in fact are not divided. We are then provided with a series of examples of indivisible realities. Among the examples there is length which is said to be indivisible according to quantity; the indivisible according to species; realities such as the point and such like, called 'divisions', for example limits; 'privations' such as evil and black; and consequently realities which have no contrary are defined as existing in actuality and separate. They are generally understood by interpretations as divine intelligence or the Unmoved mover.<sup>55</sup>

Aristotle also claims that the first operation of *nous*, which is the intellection of indivisibles takes place in an indivisible time. It means that it does not involve succession. It has its object 'the what it is according to the what is was to be'. In other words, its object is what we call the 'essence'. Thus, intellect concerns realities 'without matter'.<sup>56</sup>

What Aristotle says in *De Anima* seems to tally with what he says in *Metaphysics* where he asks what truth and falsity are in the case of "incomposite realities" (IX.10). He replies that truth lies in "touching them", and falsity does not exist. The alternative to truth is established by not touching them as well as in ignoring them.<sup>57</sup> The same is also true of 'incomposite substances' which are in actuality and are 'what it is to be something'.

So in the case of thinking of incomposite substances, it is true also that it is impossible to be mistaken. There is no falsity - one can only be or not be thinking of them. Thus one could say that thought of them is true, whereas falsity simply does not exist, but there is just ignorance.<sup>58</sup>

Aristotle's talk in *De Anima* III.6 of the divisibility or indivisibility of the time in which intellection of indivisibles occurs, together with the metaphor of touching, repeated in *Metaphysics*<sup>59</sup> confirms that Aristotle considers the intellection of indivisibles to be immediate knowledge. And if one also goes on to say that the object of non-

discursive thinking is also immaterial substance, for example, separated, divine kinds, we find ourselves in a position similar to that of Jaeger. According to him, Aristotle accepts a direct intuition of the pure forms so this idea is an obvious remnant of Platonic intuitionism. He says that:

The truth of metaphysical statements expressing a being that is not an object of experience rests, according to Aristotle, on a special intuitive form of apprehension, which ... is a sort of intellectual vision, a pure 'contact and assertion'. This is the only remnant of Plato's contemplation of the ideas, that has survived in Aristotle's metaphysics.<sup>60</sup>

There is an alternative to this version. It could be claimed that the object of such non-discursive thinking is being. One could make Aristotle a fore-runner of Heidegger by ascribing to him a conception of truth as the original revelation of being, which precedes all discursive thinking. In that case the *noein* must be interpreted as a sort of mystical contact with being. And in the next chapter I shall attempt to prove that Aristotle's conception non-discursive thinking is not Platonic nor Heideggerian; I also hope to free Aristotle's conception of non-discursive thinking from being enigmatic and mysterious while I argue against proponents of two contemporary views.

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### Notes to Chapter IV

- 1.. 1072b 13 with 1015 11-12; 1074b 33-39; 1074b 16; 1074b 26; 1074b 29-30; 1072b 18-24; 1072b 24-26; see also Chapter V section 5.
- 2.. Jaeger, W., *Aristotle, Fundamentals of History of His Development* (trans. by Robinson, R.), 1948.
- 3.. Wedin, 1988, p.268.
- 4.. Lloyd, A.C., 'Non-discursive Thought: An Enigma of Greek Philosophy', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1969-70), 70, 261-274.
- 5.. 1051b 24-33. The word sometimes translated as participation, sometimes as contact, is *thingein*, *thinganein*.
- 6.. See, for example, Sorabji, R., *Time, Creation and Continuum*, 1983, pp.149-73.
- 7.. Kal, V., *On Intuition and Discursive Reasoning in Aristotle*, 46-47, Leiden, 1988.
- 8.. Kahn, C.H., 'The role of nous in the cognition of First Principles in *Posterior*



*Analytics* II 19' in *Sym. Ar. VIII*. Padua, 1981.

9.. *Metaphysics* 1048b 24; b 34; 1050a 36.

10.. *Metaphysics*, 1048b 18-35; *Sens.* 6, 44b 2-3; *Nicomachean Ethics* X.4, 117a 14-29.

11.. Sorabji, R., 1982.

12.. *Nicomachean Ethics* X.7, 1177a 25-7.

13.. *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.12, 1153a 8-9, with reference to Speusippus.

14.. 982b 11-983a 21.

15.. Sorabji, R., 1983, pp.148-9. Also see: 982b 11 - 983a 21 and 1072b 13-30.

Aristotle says in *Politics* that "God is happy and blessed, not through any external good but in himself and because of his own natural character": 1323b 24-26.

16.. 1071b 12-17; 1059a 23; 1154b 26-27; 1127a 19-21; 1048b 18-22; 1048b 22-25. In general see *Metaphysics* IX.6.

17.. Sorabji, R., 1983, 149.

18.. Sorabji, 1982, 156.

19.. This has been thought to be a problem with all identity statements. *Metaphysics*, V.

20.. According to Williams we should try to understand the identity of intellect with its object with reference to perception; the thesis that the actualised object of thought is identical with the actualised thinking as an (unfortunate) extrapolation from the perfectly reasonable doctrine applied to the senses and their objects. The occurrence of a taste of onions is at once the actualisation of the potentiality which is my sense of taste and the actualisation of the potentiality which is the flavours of the onion. This works for the proper sensibles, but not the common or accidental ones and it is difficult to see even the form of, say, a daffodil as simply a potentiality to produce a certain thought in me. The comparison with teacher and pupil is apt for the case of tastes, since the flavour of the onion, like the teacher, is an agent which is able to cause the taste of onion to occur in a patient, my sense of taste, which is here like the pupil. The application of this identity thesis to God can only go ahead if sense can be made of it in its application to human beings. He shared his view with me during our private discussion.

21.. *Physics* III.3, 202b 19-21; 202b 14-16.

22.. Aristotle says sometimes that there is a difference in *einai* and sometimes in *logos*. He means that although the actualisation of the sense of taste is the same as the actualisation of the sensible object, it is one thing for it to be *einai* the actualisation of the sense and another for it to be the actualisation of the object. They are different in definition (*logos*). This point has been made by C.J.F. Williams during our private discussion.

23.. *Physics* III.3, 202b 19-21; 3-3, 202b 14-16.

24.. *De Anima* III.2, 425b 26-426a 26.

25.. *De Anima* III.8, 431b 20-432a 1; 3.4, 429b 6; b30-1; 430a 3-7; 3.5, 430a 14-15; 19-20; 3.7; 431a 1.2; *Metaphysics* VII.7, 1072b 21; XII.9, 1074b 38-1075a 5.

26.. Anscombe, G.E.M., *Three Philosophers*, Oxford, 1973; see also *De Anima* 431b 28-432a J; *De Anima* III.4, 429a 19; *De Anima* III.4, 429a 27-8.

27.. *Posterior Analytics* II.9.

28.. Sorabji, R., *Time, Creation and Continuum*, p146, Duckworth, 1983.

29.. I agree with Williams that *nous* and *energeia* do not come into Aristotle's account of God as two separate attributes. However, being *nous energeia* makes the real difference between discursive and non-discursive thinking. *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9.



- 30.. See for example: Kosman, L.A., 'Understanding, Explanation and Insight in the Posterior Analytics' in *Exegesis and Argument*, ed. Lee, E.N., Mourelatos, A.P.D., and Rorty, R.M., *Phronesis*, supp. vol. J. Assen, 1973; 'What Does the Maker Mind Make?' in *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima* (ed) Nussbaum, M.C., Oksenberg, A., Oxford Clarendon Press, 343-358, 1992; *Aristotle's Definition of Motion*, *Phronesis*, vol.14, 40-62, 1969; 'Divine Being and Divine Thinking in Metaphysics Lambda' in *Prec. Boston Collog. Ane. Phil*, vol. 3, 165-188, 1987; 'Substance, Being and Energeia', in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 2, 121-149, 1984. It is also worth consulting Lear, J., *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988.
- 31.. On the same point see also 430a 1-5; 430a 19-20 and 431b 17 *De Anima* III.4.
- 32.. *Metaphysics* XII.9.
- 33.. In a private discussion with me.
- 34.. Alexander and Themistius make the *enula eide* and *aula eide* objects of human thinking. Hick also follows them too (Hicks, 500 AD, a14). But Aristotle rejects that the human mind has direct knowledge of the immaterial. See *De Anima* 431b, 7-19; 432a, 3-4 and 1075a, 3-5.
- 35.. 1074b 28-29; 1072b 13-30. But particularly see *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9.
- 36.. He pointed this out during our private discussion. In Prior's terms, Aristotle's 'Identity Theory' makes sense when we apply it to what we think with, but not when we apply it to what we think of.
- 37.. *Metaphysics* IX.8, 1050b 3. There is a big controversy about whether in perception forms exist in the senses without matter. Is 'red' in the case of seeing a matter of the eye-jelly turning red, as Sorabji thinks, or the form of redness existing in the eye without matter? On the subject matter, see: Sorabji, R., 'Body and Soul in Aristotle', in *Articles on Aristotle*, 4. Psychology and Aesthetics (ed) Barnes, J., Schofield, M., Sorabji, R., Duckworth, 42-64, 1979; Burnyeadt, M.F., 'Is an Aristotelian Philosophy of Mind Still Credible?' in *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima* (ed), Nussbaum, M.C., Oksenberg, Rorty A, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 15-26, 1992.
- 38.. At 430a 6-8.
- 39.. *Metaphysics*, 107 4b 38-1075a 5.
- 40.. Sorabji, R., 1985, 146-147; Wedin, M., 1988, particularly chapters V and VI.
- 41.. 1075b 6-7.
- 42.. 1051b, 24-33.
- 43.. 1051b 27 - 1052a 4.
- 44.. 430b 26-31.
- 45.. *Metaphysics* XII.7, 1072b 14-26; *Nichomachean Ethics* X.8.
- 46.. *Metaphysics*, 9-10, 1051b 24-5; 12.7, 1072b 21.
- 47.. *De Anima* 3.6, 430a 27-b6, *Categories* 4, 2a 7-10.
- 48.. *Metaphysics* IX.10, 1051b 24.
- 49.. See, for example, Kal, V., *On Intuition and Discursive Reasoning in Aristotle*, Leiden, 1987.
- 50.. *Metaphysics* VII.4, 1030a 2-6; 10-14; *Posterior Analytics* I.4, 73b 5-10; I.22, 83a 32; *Physics* I.4, 188a 8; *Metaphysics* 14.1, 1087a 35; 1088a 28.
- 51.. *Thigein, Thinganein* 1051b 24-33.
- 52.. Tht. 190 B-C; 188B and Phd. 74 C1-2.
- 53.. *ephaptesthai*, Tht. 190 C6.
- 54.. *De Anima* III.6, 430a 26b 6.
- 55.. 430b 26-30.
- 56.. 430b 26-30.

- 57.. *Metaphysics* X.1051b 17-26.
- 58.. 1051b 26-1052a 3.
- 59.. IX.10 and occurrence of it in some other place *Metaphysics* 12.7, 1072b 21.
- 60.. Jaeger, *Aristotle*, translated by Robinson, 2nd ed. Oxford 1948, 204-5.

## V ON THE HUMAN AND DIVINE NOETIC ACTIVITY

### 1. On the Isomorphism between Human and Divine *Nous*

The analysis of *nous* in *De Anima* III.4 and III.5 in Chapter 3 argues that it is hard to establish that *nous poietikos* is of the human individual. Furthermore, I discussed that there is a strong parallel between the description of *nous poietikos* in *De Anima* and the *nous* of *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9 where Aristotle also describes the nature of divine *nous* and its thinking activity. The conception of divine thinking activity in *Metaphysics* XII.9, I take it, constitutes Aristotle's conception of divine or perfect non-discursive thinking. The reason for this is that only the essence (*ousia*) of divine *nous* is pure *energeia*. As I have previously argued, the analysis of the different applications of the term *energeia* therefore remain essential to understanding non-discursive thinking in Aristotle. Otherwise, the conception of non-discursive thinking or divine thinking activity is bound to remain obscure, mysterious, if not completely futile.

It is obvious that *Metaphysics* XII in general, but particularly chapters 7 and 9, has a central place in my account of discursive and non-discursive thinking. The view of divine *nous* and its thinking activity that I am proposing diverges from traditional views in many ways. The attempt to give a non-traditional account of Aristotle's remarks on the divine *nous* will be particularly unpopular with those who want to forge a close link between human and divine thought.

I also intend to argue that the conception of divine *nous* and its noetic activity in terms of *energeia* provides us with a radical understanding of the human noetic activity that is also described by Aristotle as *energeia*. One should, however, be cautious here whether the human noetic activity is to be considered identical with the perfect divine



noetic activity which is described as *energeia* too. The reason for raising this doubt is that the ontological status of the human *nous* may prevent human thinking from being the same as divine thinking of which *ousia* is said to be pure *energeia*, whereas there is nothing to prevent human *nous* from falling into the state of potentiality.

I have already discussed that the language of Aristotle's attribution of divinity to human thought does not call for full-blown divine status for the human *nous*, however there are two major contending views against much of what I say on the subject, which I call the 'ontological theory of *nous*' and the 'non-ontological theory of *nous*'. According to the former theory, divine *nous* in *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9 is essentially the same as human thought and *nous poietikos* must therefore be fully divine, if not identical with god. According to the latter theory, divine and human thinking activity are not different from each other, they are the same sort of activity in essence. The ontological theory of *nous* presumes the identity between divine *nous* and human *nous* but the non-ontological theory of *nous* is mainly concerned with the similarity between divine and human noetic activity. In the course of this chapter I shall discuss these two theories along with developing my own account on the subject matter.

I shall be particularly cautious against the weakness of these two theories which heavily rely on the conception of human *nous* as something divine. However, I have already argued that this not necessarily so. We do not have to be dependent on some sort of granted divinity in us in order to realise ourselves, especially our morality. If we remember the first opening sentence of *Metaphysics*, which asserts that all people have desire to know or to understand, then we will be in a position on the way to understand the nature of the human being who is to be an animal which has *nous*. Having desire to know forms a *kinetic* aspect of our intellectual life. It is of searching: we are bound to search in order to know. These two sides of human noetic activity constitute what I call

*kinetic* and active aspects of human *nous*. A divine individual is one who has desire to know and for that purpose also one who searches. That is why Aristotle says that knowing is superior to seeking. Having desire to know surely cannot be attributed to God but it is the reality of the human *nous*. Our aim as individual human beings cannot be conceived as sustaining *kinetic* aspects of our noetic activity, but reaching the state of thinking as *energeia*. In other words, we should aim to turn our intellectual life into *energeia*. Then we may become somehow divine, feel divine or, more correctly, perhaps just then we can bring our *nous* into the state of non-discursive reality.

Now let us proceed with the discussion of the ontological theory of *nous* which presumes a strong isomorphism between divine and human *nous*. I should restate here that in general the interpretations of Aristotle's theory of intellect have been restricted fundamentally to ontological concerns, for example whether *nous poietikos* is of the human individual or whether it is identical with the *nous* of *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9. Following the first line of interpretation, Aquinas attributed the *nous poietikos* to the individual and assigned it the work of extracting species and genera from experience. Alexander identifies *nous poietikos* with the *nous* of *Metaphysics* and makes the object of human and divine objects of thinking common to both. One of the contemporary advocates of the ontological theory of *nous* is Charles Kahn. In his account, the difference between divine *nous* and the individual human *nous* disappears into thin air and the discussion of the term *energeia* does not receive any attention at all. The thinking activity of divine *nous* as such or as being non-discursive gets no mention at all, let alone entering into the discussion of the picture.<sup>1</sup>

According to him there are two stages of thinking, in one of which the intellect is to be filled with concepts (*noeta*) whereas in the other the intellect puts them to use. He assigns the task of acquiring concepts to the *nous poietikos* and sees no problem



there. However, he finds employing concepts somewhat troublesome. He also relates the problem to the question of *nous* as *hexis*. Nevertheless, he argues that *De Anima* III.4, 429b-9, provides support in favour of his thesis. The passage in discussion goes like this:

When the intellect has become each thing (*hekasta*) in the way that one who actually knows is said to be so (and this happens when he can exercise his capacity by himself), it exists potentially even then in a way, although not in the sort of way as before it learned or discovered; and then it can think by itself. (Hamlyn, D.W., *Aristotle's De Anima, Books II, III*, Oxford, 1968)

First of all, it appears that it is wrong to translate the word *hekasta* as all things. Surely the intellect becomes each thing when it thinks or knows a particular thing, a particular theorem or a grammar of a particular language.<sup>2</sup> This will also rule out any necessity of reading *hekasta* in relation to concept acquisition. It appears to be concerned with somebody knowing a particular thing. Aristotle seems to speak of this in light of what he says in *De Anima* II.5 where we are given the example of a person of knowledge and the actual exercise of it. The intellect, even at this stage, has some sort of potentiality. It has become actual when it thinks (here Wedin speaks of the instant production of the objects of knowledge by productive intellect (see Wedin (1988) Ch.5).

However, the question of how productive *nous* produces an already acquired object of thought remains completely mysterious for two reasons: (a) if *nous poietikos* is actual (pure *energeia*) then how could it produce objects of thought required at a time by potential intellect? (b) the *nous poietikos* must store objects of thought like a store house but then *nous poietikos* has the danger of falling into potentiality that is unacceptable.<sup>3</sup>

The real issue here is not concept acquisition but the identity of *nous* with what it thinks with. *De Anima* III.4, 429b 5-9 is rather concerned with actual thinking. As opposed to Kahn, Aristotle tells us nothing about how *nous poietikos* enables the potential individual intellect to acquire concepts. The passages countenance no such relation between the



*nous poietikos* and the individual potential intellect. It is also important to mention the analogy of light as given by Aristotle. Light does not illuminate objects of thought, nor does it extract the forms. My understanding of the analogy between light and the *nous poietikos* is not a traditional one. I propose to understand the analogy of light in the following way. Since I identify *nous poietikos* with the divine *nous* of *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9, *nous poietikos* has no function in providing concepts to the potential individual intellect. In other words, it has nothing to do with concept acquisition at all.

Aristotle writes in *Metaphysics* that the final cause produces motion in the universe as being loved whereas all other things move by being moved. The Unmoved Mover as final cause is an object of love (*eromenon*) (1072 6 4-5). It represents the ideal of absolute perfection as a result of all the supreme attributes given to it. And in virtue of being of that nature beings in the universe turn to the Unmoved Mover as an object of love. In this context light does not produce anything. It illuminates by being pure activity and beings turn to it in order to be illuminated.

Since *nous poietikos* is nothing but divine *nous*, it brings the potential human intellect into actuality by being the object of love. Divine *nous* is pure *energeia*, like light. Everything that has no light or everything that is in the darkness is brought back to activity by the shine of divine *nous*. After all, light does no more than this in our practical experience. Our potential *nous* is attracted by the light and love of divine *nous*. God does not intervene in our actual and particular thinking of a thing. It is already there, it shines as pure *energeia*. As having a potential intellect, we have desire to know but this desire is not complete in itself. For, as merely having a potential intellect, we are not complete ourselves. Being as such, we are in motion, our *nous* is in motion (*kinesis*), we can only become complete, perfect, more correctly *energeia* when we turn our potentiality to think into active thinking. Non-discursive thinking may then be possible for the human individ-

ual. We may then be in contact with reality. However, in Kahn's account the light analogy is used to support an abstractionist or acquisitional account, but nothing Aristotle says amounts to that. As I have already said, light illuminates but it does not produce objects nor put them there. This is also true of the *nous poietikos*.

## 2. *Nous Poietikos* and Divine *Nous*

Let us continue with Kahn's account of the intellect in more detail. He argues that *nous poietikos* has to be a causal agent and thinks the objects of thought continuously. One of the cosmological results of such a view is that *nous poietikos* and the structure of the natural world are one and the same thing. In other words, both are of an isomorphic nature. In Kahn's view the structure of the natural world is seen as the colour-illustrated intellect of *nous poietikos*. If one acquires knowledge of the natural world then one's intellect becomes identical with *nous poietikos*. More precisely, he identifies the *nous poietikos* with the totality of scientific truths. *Nous poietikos* thinks scientific truths eternally whereas we can think of them just after we acquire them. One of the main problems with his account is the nature of the objects of thought. Are they the various principles of all the different sciences? How does *nous poietikos* think them at once? How is any change excluded from *nous poietikos*? Where is the importance of experience in gaining knowledge? Kahn himself says that "there is no epistemic button we can push in order to tune in on the infallible contemplation of noetic forms by the active intellect".<sup>4</sup> It is obvious that the role of experience is bound to remain futile if *nous poietikos* is given the task of providing the human potential intellect with knowledge. On the contrary, in my view only human intellect is capable of thinking the essential structure of the world. It is capable of doing so simply because it reaches truths of the world through the process of searching and only at the end of this search does it gain knowledge of these



propositions which mirror the structure of the world. There could be many ways of acquiring these propositions such as induction and demonstration but none of these require any help from *nous poietikos*. So long as one contemplates or thinks these propositions, one's thinking activity is bound to remain discursive. For non-discursive thinking activity is a contact with reality, whilst thinking of a proposition is of reality but not reality itself.

Aristotle argues that the act of thinking is identical with its object. The basis of this idea is to be found in *Physics*, *De Anima* and *Metaphysics* (III.3; *De Anima* III.2, 425 b 26-426 a 26; *Metaphysics* 1074 b 38-1075 a 5).

*Nous* is somehow potentially its objects, but now actually until it thinks them (429 b 20-31). As in the case of perception, the intellect is capable of receiving the intelligible form. It might be said that the process is a sort of assimilation. For in the case of what is without matter, thought and its objects are the same. As Aristotle says in *De Anima*, perceiving and what is perceived are one and the same thing (III.2, 425 b 26-426 a 26).

The intellect realizes its own actuality when it is one of its objects which constitutes the reality of the intellect. Since this is only achieved in non-discursive *noetic* activity the actualized intellect is nothing but reality. In other words the one engages in non-discursive *noetic* activity becomes the part of reality itself. There is no divergence between the intellect and what it thinks with. They are one and the same thing. Thus the identity of intellect with its object itself constitutes reality.

One of the major results of Kahn's view is seeing a strict isomorphism between the divine *nous* and *nous poietikos*. Thus there is no difference between *nous poietikos* and divine *nous*. They are actually the same in essence: if *nous poietikos* and divine *nous* are the same in kind then the content of these two *noes* must also be the same. Kahn's argument can be shown like this:



*nous poietikos*

They are the same in kind

divine *nous*

*nous poietikos* is identical  
with the formal structure  
of the natural world

the content of divine *nous*  
is also identical with  
the formal structure of the  
natural world

The formal structure  
of the natural world

Although I have argued in previous chapters that *nous poietikos* is identical to the divine *nous* of *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9, I fail to see how Kahn identifies the objects of *nous poietikos* with the essential and formal structure of the natural world. One thing is absolutely clear: Aristotle never speaks of the objects of *nous poietikos*. He also says nothing about the objects of divine *nous*. How could anyone then claim that divine *nous* is identical with the formal structure of the natural world, let alone identify the content of *nous poietikos* with the formal structure of the world? It simply does not work. Kahn is puzzled by how to understand what Aristotle says in *Nicomachean Ethics* X.8 1178b 19-27:

... every one supposes that they (gods) live and therefore they are active; we cannot suppose them to sleep like Endymion. Now if you take away from a living being action, and still more production, what is left but contemplation? Therefore the activity (*energeia*) of God, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative; and of human activities, therefore, that which is most akin to this must be most of the nature of happiness.

Another text referred to in conjunction with the above comes from *Metaphysics*. Aristotle speaks of divine happiness and goes on to assert that we enjoy happiness sometimes whereas God is always in that state of happiness.<sup>5</sup>

Now let us return to Kahn's claim that our noetic activity is the same as divine noetic activity. First of all, one thing is clear: Aristotle's language of divinity and its attribution does not necessarily mean that our *nous* is identical with divine *nous*. In

other words, the individual human *nous* does not share the same ontological status with divine *nous*. If that is the case, then there remains a possibility that human noetic activity may not be the same as divine noetic activity. It should be remembered that Aristotle nowhere speaks of the objects of divine thought. The sole purpose of *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9 is to prove that the object of divine *nous* must be itself, for there is nothing higher for it to think than itself. If God thought of other objects, this would imply that God would think of things which are of lesser value. Surely this cannot be accepted. Secondly, Kahn completely overlooks the different applications of the term *energeia* used by Aristotle. Although the human thinking is also classified as *energeia*, this is itself far from establishing that divine thinking activity as *energeia* is identical with the human thinking activity. One should bear in mind that bringing our *nous* into the state of *energeia* is the telos of our potential *nous*, nevertheless the *kinetic* aspect of the individual noetic activity is a reality of the potential *nous*. Thirdly, Kahn does not deal with the question of how God thinks of the formal and essential structure of the world. Would it think those propositions in combination or in separation? One thing is clear: divine *nous* will not think of objects that ordinary thinkers think of. Divine *nous* is incomposite and in thinking itself it must think something incomposite. In virtue of having no potentiality, it has also no change in it. It can think only one particular object. If it were to think of two incomposites, it would have to think them either in combination or in separation. If it thinks in combination, it cannot be said that it thinks itself. If it thinks separately, it would have to think two objects and thus it would not be incomposite. This is why Aristotle insists that it thinks itself and that its thinking is a thinking of thinking (*noesis noeseos*).

Islamic Aristotelian commentators did not identify *nous poietikos* with divine *nous*, nor did they attribute it to the individual human being. *Nous poietikos* was

conceived as a deputy prime minister or a vicar to God. The ontological theory of *nous* in general tries to remove any obstacles on the way to establishing a strict isomorphism between divine *nous* and the individual human *nous*. It does not stop here and continues to identify the content of divine *nous* with the content of *nous poietikos*. By so doing, it makes the essential and formal structure of the natural world as the object of divine *nous*, the *nous poietikos* and the individual human *nous*. It mainly relies on what Aristotle says in *De Anima* III.5 but we have already shown that Aristotle says nothing there about the objects of *nous poietikos*. Aristotle also says nothing to the effect that the *nous poietikos* is of the individual human being. The attraction of the isomorphic theory of *nous* is based on the hope of discovering mystery of divine *nous* through *nous poietikos*, and I believe that as such it has nothing to do with Aristotle's theory of human and divine thinking.

In the next section I shall be primarily concerned with the non-ontological theory of *nous*, which claims that individual human and divine noetic activity are the same in kind, thus there is no essential difference between the two.

### **3. On the Sameness of Human Noetic Activity with Divine Noetic Activity**

It is interesting, and somewhat puzzling, that discussion of the term *energeia* has not been of any importance in the interpretation of Aristotle's theory of noetic activity in essence, let alone in his conception of human and divine non-discursive activity. I have already indicated that the discussion of Aristotle's theory of noetic activity, particularly human and divine noetic activity, is bound to remain blind without taking into consideration what the term *energeia* means and how it is applied to different cases. I have already suggested that perfect non-discursive thinking is instantiated in Aristotle's conception of divine thinking in *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9. Although human thinking is



classified as *energeia* by Aristotle, nevertheless the question to be asked now is whether this is sufficient for human non-discursive thinking to be considered as something identical with divine non-discursive thinking, for the individual human is a composite being and it is also true that the *nous* of the individual human being does not appear to enjoy the same ontological status as God. Thus one of the main problems on the way to understanding human discursive and non-discursive thinking in Aristotle has been to confine *nous* to discover first principles or identify it with intuition. In the previous chapter it has been shown that this is not the sole function that Aristotle ascribes to *nous*.

Secondly, it is well known that Aristotle has a penchant for treating *nous* somehow as something divine. Again, it has been argued that this is too far away from granting any full-blown divinity to human beings. If what has been said above holds, it seems to be hard to claim that human noetic activity corresponds to divine noetic activity. In this section I shall argue against one of the modern versions of the neo-Alexandrian view given by Norman who claims that the individual noetic activity is not different from divine noetic activity. I hope to raise questions in what follows and ask whether this is possible at all.

First of all, the individual human *nous* is simply not the same as the divine *nous* from the ontological point of view. Norman does not say anything on this point. Instead he is concerned with the question of what it means to think itself for the Unmoved Mover. He replies by saying that in fact to 'think itself' is nothing but an empty reply to the question. Thus, he goes back to *De Anima* III.4 particularly in search of seeking a real answer to the question of 'to think itself'. He concludes that 'to think itself' for the Unmoved Mover is nothing different from when we think an object in contemplation, i.e. to think an object without matter. According to him, human and divine thinking are the same in kind, so long as the former has objects free of matter in

contemplation. However, he does not mention the analogy of touching in relation to the question of contemplation. It is important to remember that human non-discursive noetic activity may not after all correspond to contemplation but knowing reality in the sense of being identical with what is known and knowing.

Norman's discussion can be divided into three parts, which are as follows.

1. Aristotle's account of thinking in *De Anima* III.4 is the same as the account of divine thinking in *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9.
2. There are no real differences between the human noetic activity and divine noetic activity.
3. The mode of divine thinking is theoretical.

I will now look at each of these claims in some detail.

#### **4. On the Account of Thinking in *De Anima* III.4 and *Metaphysics* XII.7-9**

Firstly, Norman pays no attention to the characterisation of divine noetic activity in terms of *energeia*. As I claimed previously, this turns out to be extremely important. For divine *nous* as pure *energeia* eliminates any possibility of potentiality and thus any threat of change is excluded from it. However, the account of the individual noetic activity is discussed in connection with perception and it is argued that human thinking is a sort of being affected (*heteròn toiution*). Nevertheless, Aristotle has serious reservations about conceiving thinking as perceiving; thinking is not limited in the same sense as perceiving by its objects. On the other hand individual noetic activity has two aspects, one of which is of a *kinetic* nature (searching for truths) and the other the thinking of what is already known (the state of the *nous* as *energeia*). However, whatever the individual human *nous* thinks, it is nothing more than contemplation of something and as such the individual human *nous* is never really in contact with reality



unless it is engaged in non-discursive noetic activity.

Norman turns to *De Anima* 429b 5-9 and argues that Aristotle provides us with two types of thinking, namely taking on the forms and thinking the forms. In the first operation, intellect acquires the forms and in the second operation the intellect which is already *ta noeta* is able to think itself.<sup>5</sup>

There is no textual justification to interpret the passage in the way that Norman does. First of all, the alleged first type of thinking has nothing to do with taking on the forms by the intellect. It is rather, a searching activity of the intellect through which the intellect later gets what it needs to think of. So, the first operation of intellect cannot be called thinking at all. When Aristotle says at 429a 22-24 that until it thinks, the intellect is nothing, he is describing the intellect that has already completed the acquisition of some concepts. If this had not been the real issue, Aristotle would have spoken along the lines of *De Anima* II.5.

There is also no ground on which to attribute the proto-Lockean view to Aristotle. This is only possible if one assumes that there are two sorts of thinking at 429b 5-9 where, in its first stage of thinking, the intellect is already said to be identical with its object. However, what Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* XII.7 at 1072a 30 seems to countenance that thinking is not confined to external objects. Together with *De Anima* II.5, 427c 22-29, Aristotle's claim appears to be holding for episodes of thinking. More clearly, it is of a person who is already actively contemplating this particular thing as in the case of perceiving. When a person hears sound at a given time, what is heard and hearing is the same. When a person thinks of a particular object, what is thought and thinking is the same and this is only possible if, and only if, knowing is an actual particular thing.

The point is not that what is thought by the intellect is not universal. But in the



case of actual thinking the intellect is identical with that particular universal. Although the intellect is potentially identified with all intelligible forms the actual thinking cannot be extended to all intelligible forms.

To sum up, saying that objects of thought are somehow in the soul does not make Aristotle Lockean. It is certain that Aristotle commits particularity from an ontological point of view, whereas objects of thought are said to be universal. In *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle makes clear that he has no intention to think universals which exist independently from particulars.

## **5. Of the Relation Between 'to think itself' and the Object of Thinking without Matter**

The second part of Norman's account of thinking is related to the claim of *De Anima* III.4 where Aristotle says that one is able to think itself so long as the object of thinking is without matter. Norman argues directly against the conception of the divine noetic activity as contemplation in *Metaphysics* XII.7. According to him, when Aristotle says that the Unmoved Mover thinks itself he does not mean that the mode of divine noetic activity is self-contemplation. On the contrary, Aristotle means that in the case of thinking in which the object of thinking has no matter, knowing and known are identical. According to him, Aristotle is merely concerned with the identity of *nous* and the object of thought.<sup>6</sup> He also argues that this identity between knowing and known describes all abstract thinking. He tries to justify his view by establishing a genetic relation between divine noetic activity and the individual noetic activity, and he comes to conclude that they are in fact identical with each other.

It is also argued by Norman that the Unmoved Mover thinks itself simply because it is engaged in thinking activity which is continuous. The mode of divine

thinking activity is also a theoretical one in which what is known and knowing are conceived to be identical. If that is the case, for theoretical thinking in essence there is nothing to prevent human thinking from being the same as divine thinking. It is true that Aristotle says that human noetic activity is not continuous whereas divine noetic activity is. First of all, in order to establish absolute identity between divine and human noetic activity one has to prove that human *nous* is the same as divine *nous*. For if human *nous* has not got ontological independence to exist, it is possible to think that one day it may cease to think. This surely raises the important question about seeing human noetic activity as being identical with divine noetic activity. However, Norman does not consider the question of noetic activity in relation to ontological questions in Aristotle, nor does he take into account the fact that human thinking has *kinetic* and active aspects, whereas divine thinking is simply described as pure of *energeia*.

Although it is true that what characterises theoretical thinking is the identity of knowing and known, the possibility of change remains a real possibility on the side of human theoretical activity. The central passage to the discussion is the following:

Now thinking in itself is concerned with that which is in itself best, and thinking in the highest sense with that which is in the highest sense best. And thought thinks itself through participation in the object of thought; it becomes an object of thought by the act of apprehension and thinking, so that thought and the object of thought are the same, because that which is receptive of the object of thought, i.e. essence, is thought. And it actually functions when it possesses this object. Hence it is actuality rather than potentiality that is held to be the divine possession of rational thought, and its active contemplation is that which is most pleasant and best. If, then, the happiness which God always enjoys is as great as that which we enjoy sometimes, it is marvellous; and if it is greater, this is still more marvellous. Nevertheless it is so. Moreover, life belongs to God. For the actuality (*energeia*) of thought is life, and God is that actuality and the essential actuality (*energeia*) of God is life most good and eternal. We hold, then, that God is a living being, eternal, most good; and therefore life and a continuous eternal existence belong to God; for that is what God is.<sup>7</sup>

One should be cautious here. Of course, it is true that every *energeia* is perfect



as opposed to *kinesis*. However, we know that Aristotle uses the form *energeia* in relation to perception, physical things, ethical and finally *noetic* activities. In all cases except the Unmoved Mover, the term *energeia* describes activities of things which do not exist necessarily. In other words it forms an aspect of beings and can be understood in its relation to *kinesis*. But in the case of the Unmoved Mover any possibility of *kinesis* is absolutely ruled out. For we are told that the Unmoved Mover is that whose *ousia* is *energeia*. The other important point is that the Unmoved Mover exists necessarily. It is eternal and being as such its activity is continuous. However, it would be difficult to claim the same thing of the individual human *nous*. In addition to that Aristotle says that our thinking cannot be continuous as the Unmoved Mover is said to be. Perhaps the reason for this lies in that the individual human being does not exist in the same way as God does. We might cease to think one day but God thinks eternally. It seems to be possible to explain why our *noetic* activity may not be the same as with divine activity in relation to Aristotle's theory of ontology. In other words the difference between human and divine *noetic* activity might be tied to ontological distinction between the two.

Aristotle points out clearly that activity rather than potentiality is the aspect of divine *nous*. It is obvious that *De Anima*'s account of theoretical thinking cannot be thought apart from potentiality. It is true also that Aristotle conceives of human thinking activity in terms of activity, but divinity in terms of pure activity cannot be thought of the individual noetic activity but only of God. So, although the activity of divine *nous* is to be understood as *energeia* in the absolute sense of the term, the activity of the individual human *nous* is to be conceived in terms of as-if activity. Thus it only appears to be possible to think of the individual human noetic activity in terms of as-if divinity, and in terms of as-if activity.



In the above passage, Aristotle distinguishes thinking what is best from thinking what is best in itself. This also raises doubts that divine *nous* may not be essentially the same as the individual human *nous*. At 1072b 24-26 comes the discussion of the state that we are in and the state that God is in. Norman sees that God's state is generically the same as we are in.<sup>8</sup> In other words, he reduces the difference between the two sorts of thinking to a matter of degree.

I find his claim hard to accept. First of all, in the case of the individual noetic activity the state of activity can be achieved through the searching, that is a *kinetic* process. The potential intellect of the individual human being aims at reaching the state of *energeia*, active thinking. However, even then the individual human *nous* cannot go on thinking or staying in the same state eternally. Why is that? Why cannot we go on thinking continuously, whereas divine *nous* does just that? Norman never takes these questions into consideration. However, they are crucial to Aristotle's account of thinking in general. My answer is simple: the individual human *nous* does not share the same ontological status with divine *nous*, therefore it is possible to think that divine noetic activity may be different from the individual noetic activity after all. That is why the question of divine and human thinking cannot be solved without dealing with the concept of *nous* in Aristotle, particularly the divine *nous* and the human *nous*.

I would now like to turn to *Metaphysics* XII.9 to argue that divine and human noetic activity may not be of the same nature. This will also provide a partial answer to Norman's third claim.

## **6. Of the Sameness of Divine Thinking and Human Thinking**

So far, I have tried to argue that Aristotle's account of noetic activity in *De Anima* III.4 bears no relation to Aristotle's account of divine noetic activity in

*Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9. I have also maintained that Norman does not seem to be right in reading *De Anima* III.4 into *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9. In addition, his account of Aristotle's theory of noetic activity does not include the analysis of the conception of *nous* in Aristotle which, I believe, should be dealt with first. In other words, it does not appear to be possible to separate the question of noetic activity from the ontological concerns in Aristotle. Norman also does not discuss the nature of the object of divine *nous*. Thus, his account of Aristotle's theory of noetic activity seems to raise more questions than it answers.

*Metaphysics* XII.7 is not about the nature of divine noetic activity but *Metaphysics* XII.9 is designed to discuss the nature of divine noetic activity. Thus I shall be primarily concerned here with the nature of divine noetic activity as I continue to deal with Norman's claim that divine and human thinking are of the same kind.

At the beginning of *Metaphysics* XII.9 we are told that the Unmoved mover is the most divine thing (*theiotaton*). In other words, God is conceived by Aristotle as the measure of absolute divinity. It is what is to be God. Aristotle also insists that thinking must be of something. If thinking is not of something, one cannot speak of thinking at all. Thus he excludes at the outset that the intellect thinks nothing. Thinking must be of something. The reason for this is that the intellect which thinks nothing is also nothing.

It is no better than a sleeping person. Aristotle's insistence that the intellect must think of something has a crucial importance to his account of thinking in general. It brings out the fact that external reality is essential to the human thinking. Even God cannot escape from the fact that it must think of something. It is also consistent with *De Anima*'s insistence that activities and faculties are determined by their objects. It also turns out to be crucial to explain the real difference between divine noetic activity and the individual noetic activity. If one speaks of the sameness of divine *nous* and the



individual human *nous*, one has to deal with the objects of thought in both cases. God cannot have objects of the changeable world as its object of thought because this will bring the question of change to it. On the other hand, the individual human *nous* cannot have God as its object of thought for it is simply unable to do so. Human thought is bound to be sequential and moves from thought to thought. This is something the divine *nous* does not do. Although it is possible to attribute some form of non-discursive noetic activity to the individual, it is hard to think that this will be identical with divine noetic activity. For Aristotle emphasises that the ousia of divine *nous* is *energeia*. He also argues that if the object of divine thought is of a changeable nature, it would be only for the worse, for change always signifies imperfection, incompleteness which cannot be thought of as divine *nous*.<sup>9</sup>

It seems to be the case that it is impossible to remove change from human theoretical thinking because the individual human *nous* is in essence a potentiality to think. When it is in the state of *energeia* it could be so for a short period of time, for simply, ontological determination of the individual human *nous* cannot sustain thinking continuously and any contemplative activity of the individual human *nous* is bound to change when it shifts from A to B. This surely signifies a change in the individual human *nous*, so that the reality of the changeable nature of the objects of human thought remains to be a fact of human thinking (1074b 22-23). The question of continuity and discontinuity may after all indicate that human *nous* and divine *nous* are not of the same nature. Thus human noetic activity may not also correspond to divine noetic activity.

Let us take a much closer look at the claim that the Unmoved Mover thinks only of the most divine, honoured thing (*theiotaton* and *timiotaton*) and its thought does not change (*ou metabollei*). Aristotle continues his preoccupation with the nature of the Unmoved mover by saying that if it is not pure *energeia* but is of some sort of



potentiality, then it is reasonable to infer that the continuity of its thinking activity would be tiresome (1074b 28-29). The real issue here is to show that if the intellect thinks something different, it means that it has the potentiality to change. It is also true that if the ousia of the intellect is potentiality it would not make any difference to say that it thinks the same object continuously. For the thinking activity of such an intellect would be still tiring. It still has to move from a potential state to its actual exercise: in other words, it would move from one state to another. If it is the case that the noetic activity of the Unmoved Mover is not tiring in any sense, it is also true that it does not suffer from the slightest change. This also indicates that there is a certain relation between the quality of noetic activity and the ontological determination of a being.

Aristotle also insists that there is an intrinsic relation between the object of thought and the intellect. If the object of intellect changes it will again imply change in the intellect and the object of the intellect will also determine the nature of the intellect. He expresses the point by saying that "... there must be something else which is more excellent than Mind (*nous*), i.e. the object of thought" (1074b 29-30). Aristotle goes on to pursue the point by stating that:

... for both thought and the act of thinking will belong even to the thinker of the worst thoughts. Therefore, if this is to be avoided (as it is, since it is better not to see some things than to see them), thinking cannot be the supreme good.<sup>10</sup>

This brings us to Aristotle's famous and allegedly difficult formulation of the divine noetic activity in *Metaphysics* at 1074b 33-35. Aristotle tells us there that the Unmoved Mover is the highest thing and it thinks itself. Its thinking is a thinking of thinking. Norman denies that the famous conclusion at 1074b 33-5 has anything to do with any self-contemplation. Instead, he claims that the formulation of divine thinking "as noeseos noesis" refers to abstract theoretical thinking. Of course this is the result of

reading *De Anima* III.4 into *Metaphysics* XII.7, i.e. that divine and individual human noetic activity are the same in kind. However, as I have tried to show, that may not be the case and there remains an open possibility that human noetic activity may be different from the divine noetic activity.

Firstly "auton noei"; 'the intellect thinks itself', does not automatically refer to abstract thinking but, even if it does, there is no reason to think that divine noetic activity is therefore identical with the individual noetic activity, for the real issue is not that theoretic thought is divine but that divine *nous* is the highest thing. Aristotle tells us in *De Anima* III.4 that the intellect which thinks itself has its objects without matter. However, Aristotle never says that the objects of thought without matter are of being the highest or most divine and honoured things. There is also nothing in *De Anima* III.4 to say that the objects of thought without matter are common to both the human and divine *nous*. Another important point is that *Metaphysics* XII.9 never tells us anything of the objects of divine *nous*. As was said before, the Unmoved Mover is the most divine thing and its object is the most divine and honoured thing (1074b 16 and 1074b 26). There is direct connection between the ontological status of divine *nous* and its thinking activity. This is also true of the individual human *nous* and its noetic activity.

It is important to note that the formulation of divine thinking as *noeseos noesis* is rather extraordinary and is not used anywhere else to describe theoretical thinking, let alone in connection with human thinking. Another crucial point in the formulation of divine noetic activity is that there is no bridge between the divine *nous* and the activity of divine *nous*, because Unmoved Mover signifies the perfect example of the term *nous*. It is what it is to be *Nous*. The nature of such a *Nous* is also described by the term *energeia*. It is perfect *energeia*. Unmoved Mover or God is what it is to be *energeia* in the perfect sense. In other words, God is *nous* and *energeia* and as such its thinking



activity is of nothing but itself. There is no change in it. It has no potentiality in it. It does not, and cannot, bother itself with something less valuable, therefore it is wrong to say that Unmoved Mover thinks all the highest truths that we sometimes do. For Aristotle does not appear to indicate anywhere that the objects of divine *nous* are the same as those of human *nous* so that God thinks them always whereas we sometimes do.<sup>11</sup>

Just as in the case of sensation, the intellect is brought into actuality by the object. That is why it would not be wrong to say that the knower in thinking and the perceiver in sensation have a sort of passive role with regard to the object. Aristotle is, I believe, very much aware of this point. All thinking needs an object. For all thought must be of something. And after all Aristotle defines thinking as something like being affected.

Conception of thinking in this way has lead Aristotle to claim that even the Unmoved Mover cannot escape from this necessity. It must think of something which does not change. For change in the object would imply change in the thinker. If what is best and does not change is only the Unmoved Mover than it thinks of itself. The object of thought of the Unmoved Mover is itself which happens to be thought. Add the fact that the act of thought is eternal and in virtue of this the last trace of distinction between thought and its object vanishes. The Unmoved Mover and its essence is for ever one.

Now let us return to the discussion given at 1075a 5-10 and 1074b 35 - 107a 5 where Aristotle explicitly deals with the difference between human and divine thinking as thinking of thinking. Aristotle first deals with the question that knowledge, perception, opinion and understanding are of something else, but in the case of theoretical sciences, knowledge and the object of knowledge are the same, so long as objects are without



matter. Therefore, it is true to say that in this context knowing and known are identical. Norman regards these lines as conclusive evidence to establish the identity of human *nous* with divine *nous*. However, that is not the case at all: it should be recalled that matter always signifies change and objects without matter exclude any sort of change. In this context, then, human *nous* which has its object without matter is not also subject to change. Thinking as *energeia*, even in the human case, precludes any movement and as such, when the human *nous* thinks, it is identical with what it thinks with. However, this identity of human *nous* with its object does not last for a long period of time. It is like touching something; it is touching reality in fact. It has nothing to do with contemplation of the highest truths, for contemplation of the highest truths is bound to be contemplation through propositions, and propositions are not reality itself but surely the expression of it.<sup>12</sup>

Norman is not alone in rejecting the formulation of divine thinking as noeseos noesis. Anscombe also disregards the formula by saying that it is an absurdity that results from one of Aristotle's dialectical passages. There is no obvious evidence that the passage is of a dialectical nature; it is also wrong to assume that 1074b 35 - 1075a 5 represents Aristotle's final thoughts on the subject matter. There is nothing to prove that Aristotle hesitates to formulate divine thinking as thinking of thinking. He saves the formula by raising and removing objections to it. One can be inclined to interpret the formulation of noeseos noesis differently but it is clearly designed to explain the nature of divine thinking.

In the final lines of *Metaphysics* XII.9 Aristotle is concerned with the contrast between divine and human *nous*. First of all, he asks whether the object of divine *nous* can be composite or not (*suntheton*). If it is composite, such an object of thought necessarily implies that it changes from part to part of the whole. It has already been said that any kind of change has been excluded from the Unmoved Mover. To the

question of whether the object of divine *nous* can be conceptually composite, Ross replies that these will be objects of scientific knowledge and will be thought by discursive thought (*dianoia*) instead of *nous*.<sup>13</sup> The conclusion is that, whatever else is considered to be theoretical thinking, it cannot contain objects of science. As Wedin says, "if what results from any combination of thoughts counts as a syntheton, then precious little human thinking remains, even as a candidate for identification with divine thought".<sup>14</sup> Thus it is not evident that the human thinking is no different from divine thinking.<sup>15</sup> Although Aristotle ascribes to abstract thinking an important role in *De Anima* III.4, nowhere does he explicitly say that human theoretical thinking is immune from change, whereas change is denied to divine *nous* in *Metaphysics* at 1075a 6. It should also be remembered that Aristotle after all defines thinking as something like being affected. The possibility of change, in fact, has never been excluded both from the individual human *nous* and the individual human noetic activity.

Let us now deal with the question of indivisibility in relation to our subject matter. Aristotle says that everything which has no matter is to be considered indivisible. Firstly, it is possible to distinguish two types of indivisibility: the one corresponding to human thinking, and the other to divine thinking. Again, this division finely corresponds to characterisation of human thought as *energeia* and divine thought as *energeia*. In the former case, change (*kinesis*) and *energeia* form the aspect of human thinking whereas in the latter it is considered to be pure *energeia*. It should also be recalled that divine *nous* as pure *energeia* contains its end within itself. It is complete, perfect. On the contrary, the potential human *nous* is directed to reach or to be *energeia*. Even then, it is not immune to change, it cannot go on thinking continuously. Human thinking happens in a certain period of time even though it thinks of things which are timeless.<sup>16</sup>



Aristotle speaks of actual and potential indivisibles in *De Anima* III.6, 430b 6-16. Although it is possible that human *nous* may contemplate an actual individual object in a single period of time, nevertheless the object remains potentially a divided object. This is why the human type of indivisibles contain a source of change as far as human thinking is concerned, whereas this cannot be the case for the divine type of indivisibles. In addition, the human type of undivided object is open, to be grasped in terms of its parts in two different periods of time, i.e. a divided object can be grasped in an undivided thought. As has been shown, neither of these is to be applied to divine thinking for they both contain a source of potentiality.

One must also bear in mind that human and divine *nous* do not share the same ontological status in Aristotle. It also appears that the source of confusion in many interpretations of Aristotle's theory of noetic activity derives from the misconception of the concept of *nous* in Aristotle, particularly human and divine *nous*. Aristotle states that we are composite beings so that we must grasp everything in a certain period of time, which is why the human type of thinking indivisibles cannot escape from the threat of potentiality and change. Aristotle asserts at *De Memoria* at 50a 7-9 that human thinking occurs in time: "Why it is impossible to think of anything without continuity, or to think of things which are timeless except in terms of time, ...." (450 a 7-9). The crucial point here is that since we are composite beings we can only grasp everything in a certain period of time. In virtue of this it has been suggested that the undivided objects of *De Anima* III.6, 430 614-15 cannot be thought of apart from continuity and time." (Berti, 1978, 151-154).

Aristotle speaks of in *Physics* 221b 6-4 what always exists (*ta aiei onta*) as beings which are not in time. He mentions the incommensurability of a diagonal as always existing thing (222 a 4). It is not difficult to see that human thought of such

objects contains potentiality. In *De Anima* III.6 Aristotle distinguishes the incommensurable from diagonal and what results from their combination. It is obvious that in that case *syntheton* will hardly be a candidate as an object of divine thought.

Thus it follows from this passage that any indivisible object of human thinking is necessarily a potentially divisible object. The same objection also applies to *De Anima* III.6, 430b 14-15. Even the undivided object of *De Anima* III.6 cannot be thought of apart from continuity.<sup>17</sup> Thus it is obvious that divine *nous* cannot have the undivided objects of human *nous* as its object.<sup>18</sup>

What has been said so far clearly indicates that the objects of human thinking cannot be the objects of divine *nous*. It seems to be wrong, therefore, to claim that we sometimes engage in the same activity of divine *nous* that it always engages in. The state of *energeia* in which Unmoved Mover is in, is eternal. We can be in this state sometimes when we overcome the *kinetic* side of our thinking. Nevertheless, it is bound to be episodic: our thinking activity should not be taken to be divine absolutely but it may be understood in terms of as-if divinity. The nature of divine noetic activity and the individual noetic activity remains importantly different. The formulation of divine thinking as *noeseos noesis* sharply distinguishes human thinking from divine thinking.<sup>19</sup>

The Unmoved Mover must think itself so that it does not even suffer from the slightest change.

The interpretation of *De Anima* III.4 and 5 in connection with *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9, I have proposed, importantly diverges from any interpretation which assumes that human and divine *nous* are identical. It also disagrees with any minimalist account of Aristotle's theory of divine noetic activity which succeeds in making Aristotle's theory of divine thinking not only difficult but also enigmatic. As Aristotle says at the beginning of *Metaphysics*, all individuals desire to know. The desire to know consti-



tutes our *kinetic* side of knowing effort, but this desire is directed to know things including ourselves. Perhaps Kal is right in identifying knowing with non-discursive noetic activity and searching with discursive.<sup>20</sup>

I am not particularly concerned with the place of divine *nous* in the universe but to understand the conception of it. Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* XII.7 that divine *nous* is what it is and that it is simple (*haplous* 1072b 13). Thus it is the only being that is eternal, is not subject to any sort of change. We find nothing in *Metaphysics* XII.9 about the epistemological role for the divine *nous*.

Norman and Kahn insist that it is impossible to make any sense of Aristotle's theory of noetic activity unless one assumes that divine *nous* is identical with the human *nous*. Norman therefore says that:

The further point I wish to make is that this interpretation (minimalist one) lends an air of unnecessary absurdity to the whole account. It suggests that the Prime Mover is a sort of heavenly Narcissus, who looks around for the perfection which he wishes to contemplate, finds nothing to rival his own self, and settles into a posture of permanent self-admiration.<sup>21</sup>

Norman's account of Aristotle's theory of noetic activity is based on the sameness of divine noetic activity with human noetic activity. I have tried to argue that one can only speak of as-if divinity of human *nous* and its noetic activity. Aristotle nowhere grants full-blown divinity to human *nous*, so it does not seem to be possible to claim that divine *nous* and human *nous* are the same in kind, and the same might be said of noetic activity. The ontological difference between the two may point to the difference between human and divine noetic activity. In contrast to Norman, the activity of the Unmoved Mover does not have to be the *summum bonum* of human life. Aristotle says no such thing in *Nicomachean Ethics* X or anywhere else.<sup>22</sup>

It is true that the real self is identified with *nous* by Aristotle and we are advised

to act in a divine way, but the activity of *imitatio dei* may also be understood as no more than realising ourselves as a noetic being. Bees, plants, heavenly bodies try to imitate divinity but this does not mean that they yearn to be what God is. *Imitatio dei* is perhaps just a realisation of our noetic nature. We can imitate divine activity by engaging in active thinking, reaching the state of *energeia*.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the human non-discursive noetic activity might be the closest sort of divine noetic activity that we can engage in but this is surely far from proving that our noetic activity is the same as divine non-discursive noetic activity.

## 7. Conclusion

Minimalist and Maximalist interpretations of Aristotle's theory of human and divine noetic activity have been unable to capture the real insight into what Aristotle says on the subject in *De Anima*, *Ethics* and *Metaphysics*. The reason behind their failure is that both interpretations pay almost no attention to the different uses of the term *nous* by Aristotle, nor his application to the term *energeia* / *entelecheia* in different cases. They mostly rely on Aristotle's use of language in terms of as-if divinity. As a result of this Maximalist interpretation, the human and divine *nous* are mistakenly identified with each other as the content of their thinking. On the other hand, the Minimalist interpretation does nothing but succeed in making divine *nous* and its activity extraordinarily enigmatic. In the end, both the Maximalist and Minimalist interpretations of Aristotle's theory of noetic activity have produced endless arguments and thus they have moved further away from the possibility of discovering the real nature of non-discursive noetic activity in Aristotle.<sup>24</sup>



## Notes to Chapter V

- 1.. Kahn, C., 'The Role of *Nous* in the Cognition of First Principles in *Posterior Analytics* II.19; in 'Aristotle on science: the *Posterior Analytics*', *Proceedings of the Eighth Symposium Aristotelicum Padova*, ed. E. Berti, Padua, 1981; see also During's article in which he assigns the task of concept creation to *nous poietikos* and sees direct contradiction between the task of *nous poietikos* engaged in concept creation and the empirically based inductive process of *Analytica Posteriora* II.19 and *Metaphysica* I.1; During, I., 'Aristotle and heritage from Plato', *Erenos* 62, 84-99, 95, 1964.
- 2.. Kahn, 1981: 400; also Loeb translates *hekasta* as "the several groups of its objects".
- 3.. Wedin, M., *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle*, (1980) p.222.
- 4.. Kahn, 1981: 411.
- 5.. Norman, R., 'Aristotle's philosopher - God', *Phronesis* 14: 63-74, 1969, 65.
- 6.. Norman, 1969: 69.
- 7.. (1072b 18-31, Loeb).
- 8.. Norman, 1969: 68.
- 9.. See particularly 1074b 17-19; 1074b 18-20; 1074b 20-21.
- 10.. 1074b 31-33; see also *Metaphysics* XII.7 and compare IX.8. If the intellect is a potentiality since a potentiality is of contraries, the intellect may think that which is worst.
- 11.. On the question of making God to think the highest truths, see Armstrong, who writes that "He [Albinus] accepts from Aristotle that God's thought must be self-thought but it seems to him (I conjecture) as it has seemed to many critics of Aristotle since, that a bare *noesis noeseos* is a limited, sterile and unsatisfactory conception. So by boldly combining the Aristotelian doctrine of identity of thought and its object in the case of immaterial beings ... with the doctrine of ideas as the thoughts of God ... he arrives at the doctrine that for God to think himself is to think the ideas, that is the whole of intelligible reality". Armstrong, A.H., 'The background of the doctrine that the intelligibles are not outside the intellect', *Les Sources de Plotin*, Entretiens Hardt, 5: 393-425, 1957, 404.
- 12.. Rosen, S.H., 'Thought and touch: a note on Aristotle's *De Anima*', *Phronesis*, 6, 127-37, 1961; Norman, 1969: 72.
- 13.. Here, *nous* can be read as human *nous*, in virtue of which the soul considers that such and such is the case and thinks discursively (*dianoeitai*): *De Anima* III.4, 429a 23.
- 14.. Wedin, 1988: 241.
- 15.. Norman, 1969: 71.
- 16.. 1075a 8 and 1975a 5.
- 17.. Berti, E., 'The Intellection of Indivisibles in Aristotle: on mind and the senses', *Proceedings of the Seventh Symposium Aristotelicum*, ed. G.E.R. Lloyd and G.E.L. Owen, Cambridge, 1978: 151-54; *Physica* IV.12, 221b 3-4, 222a 4, *De Anima* III.6, 430a 31, *Metaphysics* VII.10.
- 18.. Aristotle says in *Physics* IV.12 221b 3-4 that there are things that exist always. He mentions at 222a 4 the incommensurability of the diagonal with the side of the square as an always existing thing. It is clear that such objects of human thought admit potentiality. *De Anima* III.6, 430a 30-31 distinguishes incommensurable from diagonal, that they were previously separate. There is also a combination of them (*suntithetai*). It is obvious that a *suntheton* will not be the object of divine thought. Aristotle in *Metaphysics* VII.10 speaks of the parts of the form (*eidos*) or essence (*einaí*). Divine

*nous* will not have these as its object of thought too. See Wedin, 1988: 242.

19.. Compare 1075a 10 with *anthropinos nous* at 1075a 7.

20.. Kal, *On Intuition and Non-discursive Reasoning in Aristotle*, 1988: 35-61.

21.. Norman, 1969: 63-4.

22.. Norman, 1969: 72.

23.. There are two excellent articles by Lang, H.S.: (i) 'Why the Elements Imitate the Heavens: *Metaphysics* IX 8-1050b 28-34, *Ancient Philosopher*, 14.2, 1994; (ii) 'Aristotle's First Movers and the Relation of Physics to Theology', *New Scholars* (1978), 52, 500-17.

24.. Wedin, M., 1988, 265.



## VI THEORIA, ENERGEIA AND EUDAIMONIA

The understanding of Aristotle's conception of discursive and non-discursive thinking through the analysis of the term *energeia* / *entelecheia*, *nous* has shown us that non-discursive noetic activity is not an enigmatic activity of *nous*. As far as the human non-discursive noetic activity is concerned, it describes one of the loftiest achievements of the individual. In this chapter I shall try to elucidate the relationship between *theoria*, *energeia* and *eudaimonia*. By doing so I hope to prove that Aristotle does not conceive the individual noetic human life as a long motion.

### 1. On the Meaning of *Theoria*

We are told at 1177a 25-27 that philosophy contains the most precious pleasures which are not of *kinetic* nature at all. Thus it is reasonable to think that the life of those who have achieved active thinking is superior to that of those who seek. The term *theoria* is generally translated into English as contemplation or apprehension. However, this does not capture the meaning of the term *theoria* in Aristotle. In the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* *theoria* denotes the activity which is also the highest good for an individual. In addition to being the highest good, it is also the acme of happiness for an individual. Thus it is obvious that one needs to know what *theoria* means in Aristotle.

There are two differing views of this, which I shall call *static* and *kinetic*. According to the former, *theoria* does not include scientific and philosophical inquiry. It restricts *theoria* merely to the contemplation of knowledge already gained. The proponents of this view rely essentially on the sentence from *Nicomachean Ethics* that I have just referred to above. Thus Barnes writes that:

Aristotelian contemplation is not, as we might be tempted to imagine, an

exercise in discursive reasoning, it is not a matter of intellectual questioning or research; it is not a matter of moving by logical inference from known premises to hitherto unknown conclusions. (Barnes, J. *Ethics*, 38, 1976)

As an argument for the thesis that the contemplator enjoys himself, Aristotle observes that those who know actively have a more pleasant life than those who search (1177a 26); evidently then, contemplators are not seekers of wisdom but possessors of it. The Aristotelian contemplator is one who has already acquired knowledge,<sup>1</sup> furthermore one who has achieved a life of noetic activity (*energeia*).

Barnes is not alone in taking this view of *theoria*. Earlier, Ross had also defended the view that the happy life is the life of contemplation, not the life of searching.<sup>2</sup> Hardie thinks that Aristotle is actually creating "a startling paradox". He refers to Gauthier and Jolif to prove that Aristotle eliminates discovery from the contemplative life.<sup>3</sup>

There is however, a recent tendency, which I call the *kinetic* view, to include scientific and philosophical inquiry in *theoria*. According to those who take this view, whilst the completion of the task can be desired for its own sake, this does not mean that the activity of completing cannot also be desired for its own sake. Those who wish to include the process of inquiry in *theoria* are, I believe, doctrinally motivated. They think that the modern scientist would agree with them. They claim that pleasure does also lie in the process of inquiry. So intellectual excitement cannot merely be confined either to the discovery of truth or to the contemplation of it.<sup>4</sup>

Sorabji also writes in favour of the *kinetic* view, claiming that:

Part of the pleasure of philosophical activity is emerging from the state of perplexity which Aristotle describes in *Metaphysics* I.2 (98 2b 11). Aristotle's God who has always known and contemplated the truth, has missed this peculiar philosophical excitement. If we too had been so born or so educated that we never got into a state of perplexity, we should I think, have missed something of value.<sup>5</sup>

I believe that the defenders of the *kinetic* view and their opponents - who hold what I call the 'static view' - are both mistaken in their interpretation of *theoria*. The



reason is that they pay almost no attention to Aristotle's conception of *nous*. They are almost silent on *De Anima* 3.5 where Aristotle explicitly deals with how thinking comes out. Aristotle's view on *nous* and thinking in *Metaphysics* is merely overlooked. As a result of this, the meaning of *theoria* in Aristotle, particularly in *Nicomachean Ethics*, is constantly misrepresented.

Aristotle says in several places that we have some divine element in us that turns out to be *nous*. But this does not mean that we sometimes think of things that God always thinks of. We are not completely absorbed in the godhead. The search for truth constitutes an important part of the rational human being. So if *theoria* means the contemplation of everything we are simply incapable of it. Although contemplation might play an important role in preserving knowledge, but Aristotle certainly would not approve of only sitting and contemplating a piece of knowledge that one has already acquired (*De Anima* II 5). Bonitz reminds us that the term *theoria* is used interchangeably with *skepsis*.<sup>6</sup>

Allan appears to be right in saying that there are different meanings of *theoria*.<sup>7</sup> Aristotle speaks of practical, productive and theoretical science. He includes natural science among the theoretical sciences, since it is pursued to acquire knowledge for its own sake. Thus Aristotle describes the natural scientist as *phusikos theôrêtikos*.<sup>8</sup> And we are told at *Metaphysics* 993b 20-23 that although theoretical science is concerned with truth practical science aims at action. It also appears that *theoria* can signify a particular branch of study. Aristotle says that "these things are the subject of a different *theoria*".<sup>9</sup> However, it can also mean its investigation in writing, simply a book. The example comes from *Historia Animalium* at 589a 20 where Aristotle says that "as was stated in the *theoria* on plants".

Although the term *theoria* seems to have different meanings in Aristotle,

*theorein* primarily meant 'to see' or 'observe'. And some uses in Aristotle of the term *theoria* and *theorein* can also mean 'observation' and 'observe'. In *Nicomachean Ethics* 1169b 33-34 Aristotle says that it is easier to observe our neighbours than ourselves. It would be rather odd to translate this as contemplation. Joachim writes, on the meaning of the term *theoria*, that:

Man's attitude of mind is contemplation (*theôria*), the formal habit of thinking which gets established in him is theoretical science (*theôrêtike epistême*), and the thought which is at work in him is theoretical reason (*dianoia theôrêtike*).<sup>10</sup> All theoretical or speculative inquiries, all sciences as we use the term, fall under the heading of 'theoretical sciences'. The 'scientific man', in this restricted sense of the term, is entirely concerned with knowing or understanding. He plays the part of a spectator of what is - and is independently of him. He neither desires nor is able to alter the truth of things. When the objects of his study are subject to change - when, for example, he is investigating natural phenomena - he tries to watch the process, not to modify it, except in so far as experimental modification helps him to understand.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. The Relation Between *Theoria*, *Energeia* and *Kinesis*

I believe that it is essential to understand what Aristotle means by *theoria*, *energeia* and *kinesis*, since in *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book X chapter 7) Aristotle says that it is *theoria* that is *eudaimonia*. His definition of *eudaimonia* leaves out *kinesis*. In fact perfect happiness cannot be identified with *kinesis* at all. It is important to see why.<sup>12</sup>

In *Metaphysics* IX.6 Aristotle states that *energeia* and *kinesis* are of different natures. Although *energeia* describes what is perfect and is an end in itself, *kinesis* is directed toward an end and is imperfect. In other words, it is determined and characterised by an end which is completely external to it. Therefore, *kinesis* is not and cannot be something complete (*teleia*) (1048b 18-22).

The distinction between *energeia* and *kinesis* plays a very important role in Aristotle's metaphysics and his physics and it cannot be denied that it is also crucial to his ethics. A *kinesis* is directed toward an end outside itself. Thus it cannot be an ultimate end of human life. The ultimate end of human life must be some *energeia*.



And Aristotle uses being happy as an example of an *energeia* in *Metaphysics* IX.6.

Furthermore, in *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle defines the ultimate *telos* of human life as *theoria* and describes it as the most important human noetic activity (1177a 19-21).

### 3. Theoretical Activity and the Nature of its Divinity

In the tenth book of *Nicomachean Ethics*, particularly in Chapter 8, Aristotle comes to conclude that the philosophical life is best amongst other sorts of lives, for it consists of *theoria* and the theoretical *nous* is the best part in us. Philosophical life as such resembles the kind of life that the gods have. Aristotle claims that of all living beings, they are the ones who live in perfect happiness (1178b 8-9). Aristotle excludes them from any sort of practical activity. The only life they have is the life of *theoria*.

... the activity (*energeia*) of God, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be (*theôrêtike*) contemplative; and of human activities (*energeia*), therefore, that which is most akin to this must be most of the nature of happiness (*eudaimonikotatē*). This is indicated, too, by the fact that the other animals have no share in happiness, being completely deprived of such activity. For while the whole of the gods is blessed, and that of men too in so far as some likeness of such activity belongs to them, none of the other animals is happy, since they in no way share in contemplation (*theoria*). Happiness extends then, just so far as noetic activity does, and those to whom noetic activity more fully belongs are more truly happy, not as a more concomitant but in virtue of noetic activity; for this is in itself precious. Happiness therefore, must be some form of noetic activity.<sup>13</sup>

Those who work mostly on Aristotle's ethics busy themselves about whether Aristotle claims that those who are more involved in noetic activity also have more happiness or not. This is because those who perceive Aristotle in the way just indicated do not seem to have taken into account *De Anima* and *Metaphysics* where Aristotle tells us why he thinks that the life of God is the paradigm of happiness as a noetic being.

This is why it is essential to go back to *Metaphysics* as well as *De Anima*. But here I only wish to discuss what Aristotle says on the nature of God in Book XII of *Metaphysics*.

We are told in chapters 6 and 7 that the Unmoved Mover (God) is a substance

whose *ousia* is activity and matterless. It exists necessarily, and is the finest of things. Of course it thinks itself and its thinking is a thinking of thinking. This is in contrast with human thinking which is relative to a definite context of thought. It is not, say Selena, that thinks herself but it is Selena's intellect that thinks itself. What this means is that the human being is not aware of its intellect directly but only by thinking of objects which are external. This is as close as one can get to one's own intellect.

If this is the case it would be wrong to assume any possibility of direct mental grasp of the self as a thinking substance. But this is not to say that Aristotle rejects the notion of self-consciousness. In *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle states that we perceive that we perceive and think that we think. It is obvious that the passage countenances self-consciousness for individuals. Thus, to be aware of myself as perceiving or thinking is merely to be aware that I am perceiving or thinking.

But when we come to the Unmoved Mover the situation is different. It is not something that it has an intellect but it is intellect, it is not aware of itself through perceiving or thinking. Secondly the Unmoved Mover is a particular, so the requirement that thought must be about universals does not apply to it, for it is a particular being. Thirdly, it is pure *energeia* and as such it seems to be entirely different from the individual human being.

The Unmoved Mover certainly does not think of objects that ordinary individuals think of. And it is particularly important that it does not eternally think of the objects that we episodically think of (as Alexander and certain neo-Alexandrians think) (see Chapter V).

Since Unmoved Mover is incomposite, it must also think something incomposite. Also Unmoved Mover has no potentiality for change, so it can only think itself. Assume that it were to think two incomposites, for instance A and B. Either it



thinks these two incomposite objects in combination or in separation. If it thinks these in combination, then it cannot think itself. If it thinks them in separation then it would not be incomposite. This is why Aristotle asserts that its thinking must be nothing other than a thinking of thinking. It is for this reason that in Book XII of *Metaphysics* at 1074b 33-35 Aristotle discards the use of 'that' and says that it is thinking of thinking (*noesis noeseos*). Obviously the latter phrase does not necessitate the plurality and externality of the objects of thought for the Unmoved mover. The object of Unmoved Mover is itself, and when it thinks itself it does so directly. Let us now quote the passage where Aristotle also connects this sort of thinking with the highest pleasure which is enjoyed by Unmoved Mover:

Such, then, is the finest principle upon which depends the sensible universe and the world of nature. And its life is like the best which we temporarily enjoy. It must be in that state always (which for us is impossible), since its actuality (*energeia*) is also pleasure. (And for this reason waking, sensation and thinking are most pleasant, and hopes and memories are pleasant because of them.) Now thinking in itself is concerned with that which is in itself best, and thinking in the highest sense with that which is in the highest sense best. And thought thinks itself through participation in the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought by the act of apprehension and thinking. So please retain that thought and the object of thought are the same because that which is receptive of the object of thought i.e., essence, is thought. And it actually functions when it possesses this object. Hence it is actuality (*energeia*) rather than potentiality that is held to be the divine possession of rational thought, and its active contemplation (*theoria*) is that which is most pleasant and best. If, then, the happiness which God always enjoys is as great as that which we enjoy sometimes, it is marvellous; and if it is greater, this is still more marvellous. Nevertheless it is so. Moreover, life belongs to God. For the actuality of thought (the activity of the *nous* is life) is life, and God is that actuality; and the essential actuality of God is life most good and eternal. We hold, then, that God is a living being, eternal, most good; and therefore life and a continuous eternal existence belongs to God; for that is what God is.<sup>14</sup>

At the beginning of the passage that I have just quoted above Aristotle says that 'God's life is like the best we enjoy for a brief spell' (1072 b 4). To deny this would be to spoil the spirit of what Aristotle writes.

But, the individual human being, like other physical beings, is a compound of matter and form, a syntheton (XII.11). And the soul of the individual human being is the actuality of the body. However, *nous* appears to be different from the soul. He

writes in *De Generatione Animalium* that '*nous* comes from outside and is alone divine, for no bodily activity has any role in the activity of *nous*' (736 b 27-29).

Thus it appears that it is difficult to distinguish human *nous* from divine *nous*. This is also true of human and divine *noetic* activity. However, it should be noted that human *nous* is a capacity to be activated, like everything else in the physical world by the attraction of the Unmoved Mover who, unlike the individual human being, is pure *energeia* and eternal.

Before going further I would like to point out that when Aristotle says that God's activity (*energeia*) is most pleasurable he identifies it with rest rather than motion. This is also the case with *Nicomachean Ethics* (1154b 26-280). But one should not forget that we, the individual noetic subjects, live in the world of motion (*kinesis*) and *energeia*. Nevertheless, Aristotle identifies the real with *nous* and he also describes the activity of the real self in terms of *energeia*. However, the perfect paradigm of *energeia* is God, in which there is no *kinesis*. For change in the object would imply change in the thinker. What is best and does not change can only be itself and this is why Aristotle also identifies the real self in us with our *nous*. But there is always a gap between us and the world in which we live. Even so, we can still be happy through participating in the activity of *theoria* that cannot be continuous and eternal as is divine *theoria*. The pleasure of noetic activity (*theoria*) lies not in my thinking that I am thinking of a given object but rather simply in my thinking the object. In other words, *theoria* is complete immersion in the object that the individual human being can sustain for a short period of time. This is why the Unmoved Mover enjoys the greatest of pleasures; it is precisely because it is eternally and necessarily immersed in the object of its thought and need not suffer even the slightest distraction from thinking that is thinking. In its thinking the last trace of distinction or gap between thought and its object vanishes; their essence is for



ever one.

#### 4. *Nous* and the Real Self

It is important to recall again that the term *nous* is employed by Aristotle in several different contexts. That is why, if one does not distinguish its various uses, one cannot find anything in Aristotle but inconsistency, contradiction and confusion.

Aristotle says that the ethically virtuous individual loves himself / herself and at 1168b 35 he also tells us that such a person loves his/her *nous* more than anything else. It is generally agreed that Aristotle here refers to the part of the soul that allows a person to be in control of his/her life. But in Book X of *Nicomachean Ethics* at 1177a 13 and 1178a 7 *nous* signifies the part of the soul that is responsible for theoretical reasoning. And at 1169a 2 Aristotle states that each person is to be identified with this part of the soul.

My aim here is not to discuss whether Aristotle is right in his claim that a person is to be identified with his practical or theoretical *nous*, but to point out that the term *nous* is used in more than one sense.

Now I would like to turn to the tenth book of *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle defends the life of *theoria* and identifies the real self with the theoretical part of the soul. At 1178a 2 Aristotle says that a person is his/her *nous*. It is clear from the context that he identifies an individual with theoretical *nous* whereas he has said previously that a person is to be identified with his/her practical reason (IX.8).

I do not believe that Aristotle contradicts himself on the matter or changes his mind. He simply tries to distinguish different types of lives in accordance with different sorts of activity of *nous*. It would have been rather odd for Aristotle to say that the theoretical life is superior to all other types of life at the beginning of his inquiry into

*eudaimonia*. However, the tenth book of *Nicomachean Ethics* represents the end of his ethical inquiry where Aristotle shares his discovery of the perfect life with us and this is the life activity that is also called perfect happiness.

In chapters VII and VIII of the tenth book of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle tries to elucidate his conception of happiness and finally asks whether the political or the philosophical life is best. There are three types of the self-lover:

- i) the lover of theoretical *nous*;
- ii) the lover of practical *nous*;
- iii) the lover of external goods.

However, he makes it clear that a person is to be identified with his/her theoretical *nous*; since it is a real self and the person who loves himself/herself most of all is the philosopher. Why Aristotle thinks that theoretical *nous* is the best part of the soul in us requires an investigation into his theory of thinking. I have already dealt with this in Chapter V.

## **5. Perfect Happiness and *Theoria***

In the sixth chapter of Book X of *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle finally gives free rein to his own inclinations. He has already dealt with the virtues, friendship and pleasure, it is now time to give a full response to the question of what is happiness. What is the final aim of human life and what sort of life should be called a happy life (1176a 31-32)?

He briefly reminds us of what he has already said in Book I at 1032a 30-61 and b 24-25. *Eudaimonia* is not a state but an activity (*energeia*) which is chosen for its own sake. Here it is also important to recall the distinction between *energeia* and *kinesis*. While the former is complete and is its own end, *kinesis* is imperfect because of



its incompleteness, in that it has its purpose beyond itself. But happiness is self sufficient. Everything else is chosen for the sake of something in human life but happiness has no end beyond itself. It is not chosen for some further end. Although happiness is pleasure, pleasurable, nevertheless it is different from any sort of amusement. Amusements are a form of relaxation and as such they are necessary since we cannot go on working continuously. However, they are not *energeiai* and in virtue of this they are not ends in themselves. In the light of what has been said Aristotle goes on to say that:

But if happiness consist in activity (*energeia*) in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be activity in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be the virtue of the best part of us. Whether then this be the intellect, or whatever else it be that is thought to rule and lead us by nature, and to have cognizance of what is noble and divine, either as being itself also actually divine, or being relatively the divinest part of us, it is the activity of this part of us in accordance with the virtue proper to it that will constitute perfect happiness (*teleia eudaimonia*); and it has been stated already that this is the activity of noetic activity.<sup>15</sup>

After identifying *teleia eudaimonia* with active *theoria* Aristotle continues his explanation of the nature of perfect happiness by saying that:

And that happiness consists in noetic activity may be accepted as agreeing both with the results already reached and with the truth. For noetic activity is at once the highest form of activity (*energeia*) (since the intellect is the highest thing in us, and the objects with which the intellect deals are the highest things that can be known), and also it is the most continuous, for we can reflect more continuously than we can carry any form of action. And again we suppose that happiness must contain an element of pleasure; now activity in accordance with wisdom is admittedly the most pleasant of the activities in accordance with virtue: at all events it is held that philosophy or the pursuit of wisdom contains pleasures of marvelous purity and permanence, and it is reasonable to suppose that the enjoyment of knowledge is a still pleasanter occupation than the pursuit of it. Also the noetic activity will be found to possess in the highest degree the quality that is termed self sufficiency.<sup>16</sup>

In the first book of *Nicomachean Ethics* three ways of life were distinguished, namely the voluptuous, the political and the theoretical. The examination of the last one was left to a later stage. When we turn back to the tenth book of *Nicomachean Ethics* it is obvious that this last book represents the climax of the whole work. There is no inconsistency between what he says in Book X and what he has already said in Book I.

He just repeats the most essential point. The philosopher as human being needs also physical well being; for the composite nature of philosophy does not allow him/her to sustain himself on thought alone; good health, food and other practical necessities are indispensable. He must also act in accordance with justice, courage and all other virtues. For the philosopher is a human being and lives among other people. But the philosopher is the sort of person who does not aim to maximise his/her physical pleasures or practical needs. Instead the philosopher loves the best part of his/her soul and seeks to bring it to perfection. Therefore sufficiency does not require excess, and to display excellence "one need not be lord of land and sea".<sup>17</sup>

Moreover happiness lies in leisure (*scholē*). The purpose of being busy is to get leisure as the purpose of war is to have peace. Political activity has an end beyond itself, for it seeks either power or honours or at least to provide an environment in which his/her fellow citizens could be happy. However, political activity is itself unleisured. Only the philosophical life contains its end within itself and can provide the perfect.

Aristotle sums up the activity of *nous* at 1177b 19-26 by saying that it is an end in itself and has its own intrinsic pleasure. The activity of *nous* is also self sufficient and as free from *kinesis* as is humanly possible. As such it represents perfect happiness. But Aristotle is not completely certain of the conception of perfect happiness so described. Do not the poets and sages warn of the hybris of aiming too high, and the nemesis which follows it? Aristotle give a memorable reply to this question saying that:

Such a life as this however will be higher than the human level: not in virtue of his humanity will a man achieve it, but in virtue of something within him that is divine; and by as much as this something is superior to his composite nature, by so much as is its activity superior to the exercise of the other forms of virtue. If then the intellect is something divine in comparison with man, so is the life of intellect divine in comparison with human life. Nor ought we to obey those who enjoin that a man should have a man's thoughts and a mortal the thoughts of mortality, but we ought so far as possible to achieve immortality, and do all that man may to live in accordance with the highest thing in him; for though this be small in bulk, in power and value it far surpasses all the



rest. It may even be held that this is the true self of each, in as much as it is the dominant and better part and therefore it would be a strange thing if a man should choose to live not his own life but the life of some other than itself. Moreover what was said before will apply here also: that which is best and most pleasant for each creature is that which is proper to the nature of each; accordingly the life of the intellect is the best and the pleasantest life for man, in as much as the intellect more than anything else is man; therefore this life will be the happiest. The life of moral virtue, on the other hand, is happy only in a secondary degree.<sup>18</sup>

The human being, like everything else in the world of change, is a compound of matter and form. In other words the human being is *syntheton* and it is the form which gives a syntheton its specific character and differentiates it from other things. It constitutes its essence (*ousia*).<sup>19</sup> But if that is the case why does Aristotle speak of two sorts of life, namely the life of *nous* and the life of virtue?

According to Gauthier, here Aristotle does not compare or contrast two different sorts of life but they rather represent two integral parts of a single life. In other words Aristotle considers a single person's life which has two aspects. This interpretation is severely criticised by Cooper. He claims that in English and in French the Greek word *bios* refers to the two lives which are to be an integral part of a single person. One can lead a social as well as spiritual life. But he thinks this cannot be true because in Greek *bios* always means a mode of life and in any one period of time one can only have one mode of life. Hence, according to him, Aristotle contrasts an intellectual life with a moral life. As a result the Greek expressions, he argues, should be understood as referring to different lives led by two different kinds of persons.<sup>20</sup>

But I find it very hard to agree with Cooper because if a person is *syntheton* he/she will not be able to realise perfect activity of *theoria* in its ultimate sense. He or she can only engage in the highest activity of *theoria* as a composite human being. Therefore the life of an individual necessarily contains two aspects of life.

It is not easy to grasp Aristotle's thought about the nature of *nous*. Although the distinctive mark of humanity is not found in the lower beings, the best thing in an

individual is *nous* and *nous* is the real self of an individual. But does this mean that the *nous* we have is of the same nature as the *nous* of God? If the answer is yes then it is hard to see what prevents us from leading a life like that of God (see particularly Chapter V section 6).

Aristotle says that the *ergon* of the human being is to live according to the highest that is in it. But when he says this he does not mean that one has to lead a life of *kinesis* but to live a life activity, having the capacity to grow, to reproduce, to perceive. Aristotle is aware of the fact that we are clogged with matter and in virtue of this there are imperfections and hindrances in our life. On the other hand, God does not have any imperfection. God does not have to think anything except itself, whereas we have to struggle to activate even the best part, the divine-like part in us, namely *nous*, in the world of change. He also says that *nous* comes from outside and is alone divine since no bodily activity has any part in the activity of *nous*.<sup>21</sup> In virtue of this the activity of *nous* completely differs from that of perception, indeed from any other bodily activities:

But that the perceptive and thinking faculties are not alike in their impassivity is obvious if we consider the sense organs and sensation. For the sense loses sensation under the stimulus of a too violent sensible object; e.g., of sound immediately after loud sounds, and neither seeing nor smelling is possible just after strong colours and scents; but when mind (*nous*) thinks the highly intelligible, it is not less able to think of slighter things, but even more able; for the faculty of sense is not apart from the body, whereas the mind (*nous*) is separable.<sup>22</sup>

I believe that understanding the different uses of the term *nous* is indispensable for understanding Aristotle. He nowhere says in *Ethics* that the *nous* of the human being is identical with the *nous* of God. Although in *De Anima* III.5 he speaks of the *nous poietikos*, he does not say that it is of the human being, and the divine noetic activity certainly does not correspond to the human noetic activity.

But I do not see anything incompatible with the idea that human *nous* is a faculty or dynamis that is activated, like everything else in the world, by the attraction of the



First Unmoved Mover, who unlike us, is pure *nous*, simple and active. At 1178b 8 Aristotle argues that intellectual activity is best for a person. For we also think of God as happy and blessed so it would be ridiculous to ascribe to it any form of practical activity. No activity is superior to that of divine noetic activity. Thus he comes to say that those who cultivate and use their intellect are in the best condition and are also the favourite of God.

And it seems likely that the man who pursues intellectual activity, and who cultivates his intellect and keeps that in the best condition, is also the man most beloved of the gods. For if, as is generally believed, the gods exercise some superintendence over human affairs, then it will be reasonable to suppose that they take pleasure in that part of man which is best and most akin to themselves, namely the intellect, and that they recompense with their favours those men who esteem and honour this most, because they care for the things dear to themselves, and act rightly and nobly. Now it is clear that all these attributes belong most of all to the wise man. He therefore is most beloved by the gods; and if so, he is naturally most happy. Here is another proof that the wise man is the happiest.<sup>23</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

The theoretical psychology of *De Anima* does not seem to countenance that a human being is essentially godlike. Neither does Aristotle say anywhere in *Nicomachean Ethics* that the human *nous* is identical with divine *nous* even though he identifies each person with his/her own *nous*. It is precisely for this reason that the conception of happiness is to be based on human nature. But some think that Aristotle does draw a picture of a superhuman in the tenth book of *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>24</sup> According to them, Aristotle claims that some individuals are potentially gods. But the history of humanity does not suggest we have been godlike at all.

*Imitatio dei* does not necessarily mean that things yearn to be God or strive to partake of divinity in order to become a part of God but rather it means to become perfect, complete, through realising their essence (*ousia*).

Only by doing can human beings actualise the divine element in themselves. We

can perfect ourselves by realising our nature but not by striving to become godlike. As

Aristotle says in *Nicomachean Ethics*:

... choice is certainly not a wish, though they appear closely akin. Choice cannot have for its object impossibilities: if a man were to say he chose something impossible he would be thought a fool; but we can wish for things that are impossible, for instance immortality.<sup>25</sup>

We may wish to become like God but this is not within our power, for example like being immortal as Aristotle says above.

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## Notes to Chapter VI

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- 9.. *Generatione et Corruptione* 334a 15; *Posterior Analytics* 641b 2-3.
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- 14.. 1072b 13-30.
- 15.. 1177a 12-18.
- 16.. 1177a 18, b 26.
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Press, 1940; Cooper, J., *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*, p.160, Indiana, 1986; Gauthier's *L'Ethique à Nicomaque*, 893-836, Paris, 1958.

21.. *De Anima* 413b 25-27 and *Generatione Animalium* 736b 27-29.

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25.. 1112b 20-24.

## VII ON THE INTERPRETATIONS OF ARISTOTLE'S

### THEORY OF INTELLECT

#### 1. Greek Commentators

The bounds of soul you would not discover, though travelling every road  
so deep a logos has it. Heraclitus

As for the subject of *nous*, when and how and from what source it is  
acquired by those who share this principle, raises a most baffling  
problem, which we must endeavour to solve so far as our powers allow  
and so far as it is soluble. Aristotle GA 73665-8

So far I have tried to argue that there is an intrinsic relation between Aristotle's  
concept of discursive and non-discursive *noetic* activity and the terms *energeia* /  
*entelecheia* and *nous*. Now I would like to examine the views of the Greek and Arabic  
commentators on Aristotle's theory of intellect with this fact in mind. The reason for  
doing so is to provide an insight into the possible interpretations of his teaching on the  
subject. In addition from that, I would like to survey the views of Greek and Islamic  
commentators from a particular point, which is the conception of the nature of divine  
and human *noetic* activity, and the relation between divine and human noetic activity.

The most famous, arguably most important and the most intensely studied  
sentences in the history of philosophy are those in Aristotle's *De Anima*, where he  
undertakes to explain how thinking happens and what thinking is.<sup>1</sup> Yet it is fascinating  
to discover that even Aristotle's immediate disciples did not agree in their conception of  
what the intellect is and how thinking occurs. That is to say, they even had diverging  
views on the interpretation of what Aristotle says on the subject in *De Anima*. For  
example, Theophrastus and Eudemus were Aristotle's greatest disciples and followers



and they received their knowledge on the subject-matter directly from the philosopher. Thus, Theophrastus and Eudemus are sources of two diverging interpretations. Does this mean that it is impossible to give a well-founded exegesis of Aristotle's exposition of the intellect? I believe that the answer need not be affirmative. For centuries Greek, medieval, Islamic, Jewish, Christian and European philosophers pored over what Aristotle says, seeking the key for deciphering the essence of being human and the structure of the universe.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The Intellect is the Principle of Knowledge: Theophrastus

It is interesting to see how interpretation of *De Anima* III.4 and 5 has been the source of controversy since the beginning. In these chapters Aristotle tries to explain how thinking happens, that is, how we are able to think. But generations of interpreters have busied themselves with these questions, which are the following:

1. Are *nous poietikos* and *nous pathetikos* immaterial or not?
2. Is the intellect the principle of knowledge or not?
3. How do we participate in divine thinking which is non-discursive, if this is possible at all?

In exposition of Theophrastus' view on *De Anima* III.4 and III.5 I shall try to concentrate mainly on the three questions put above.

According to Theophrastus, Aristotle takes *nous poietikos* to be a part of human nature, and with this interpretation of Theophrastus, one could say that the way to identify the human intellect with God has been opened, as opposed to that of Eudemus, who has been reported to be the most faithful to his teacher, and who identifies the active intellect with God. Thus, Theophrastus and Eudemus have come to represent the two opposite views on *De Anima* III.4 and 5 and they constitute the deepest division

between interpretations. As far as the subject-matter is concerned, Theophrastus understood that both the active and the passive intellect are to be taken to be immaterial in Aristotle. Secondly, he claims that *nous poietikos* and the *nous pathetikos* were something belonging to the individual human being. Finally, in Theophrastus' view, both intellects are considered to be essential constituents of an individual human being.<sup>3</sup>

Now let us discuss Theophrastus' view on the matter in some detail.

He is very much concerned with the statement that thinking is an identification with the object of its knowledge. However, Aristotle also says that thinking resembles sensation and in this sense it is an affection. On the other hand, he also states that the intellect, but not its object, is the principle of knowledge. Further, the intellect has the power to initiate the act of knowing. It is obvious that in the first case thinking corresponds to sensation whereas in the second case the intellect is conceived as the principle of knowledge. In other words, the intellect has the power to initiate the process of thinking. The difference between the two understandings is then:

- A.    i)     Thinking is an identification with the object of knowledge.
- ii)    Thinking is an affection - like sensation.
- B.    i)     The intellect is the principle of knowledge.
- ii)    Thinking has its origin in the intellect.<sup>4</sup>

It is obvious that A is based on *De Anima* III.4 where Aristotle speaks of thinking in terms of affection, which runs parallel to sensation. On the other hand, B appears to refer to *De Anima* II.5 in which thinking is contrasted with sensation in that the intellect is the principle of knowledge, which also has the primary initiating power to know.<sup>5</sup>

One could, however, go against Theophrastus by pointing out that in *De Anima* III.4 Aristotle states that the initiative to know only belongs to the intellect that has



knowledge and has it at its disposal. In other words, the intellect becomes capable of thinking the object at its will if, and only if, it has already gained the knowledge. But apart from that the intellect does not have the power to produce the knowledge. However, then we are faced with the statement of *Posterior Analytics* where Aristotle describes the intellect as the principle of science. It may be that in this statement Theophrastus' view of the intellect could find its justification. Aristotle says in *Posterior Analytics* that *nous* is the source of knowledge.<sup>6</sup> But it appears that Aristotle is concerned there with the question, that is, if thinking is an activity of the intellect, could the starting-point required by thinking in turn be provided by the reasoning activity of the intellect? One might give a reply to the question by saying that the intellect (*nous*) is actually called a principle here because it has the potential to be affected, to gain knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

It is also true that in *De Anima* II.12 the term *principle* is used of the faculty of sensation. Nevertheless, Aristotle does not mean that sensation is the principle of knowledge. It would also be wrong to ignore what Aristotle says about thinking in *Metaphysics*.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, Theophrastus does not regard the term *principle* as equivalent to *faculty*. For it would be uninformative then to describe the faculty of sensation as the principle of sensation. In fact sensation is an affection. It is obvious that Theophrastus attaches a specific meaning to the term *principle* but it would be wrong to confine his argument to certain passages in *De Anima* and *Posterior Analytics*.<sup>9</sup>

It appears, however, that Theophrastus does not consider the different uses of the term *nous* in Aristotle. It might be true to say that the intellect (*nous*) in charge of scientific inquiry could be a starting point of the thinking activity. But it is wrong to think that Theophrastus understands the term *principle* to denote the faculty of thinking or sensation. He attaches a special meaning to it and I believe his view could be traced

back to Aristotle.<sup>10</sup>

Now we will consider Theophrastus' characterisation of the human intellect in more detail. According to him, the human intellect contains a potential and a causative principle.<sup>11</sup> It appears that in Theophrastus' account the human intellect is freed from the limitation of the objects of thinking. For the productive intellect in a sense is external to a human being, but nevertheless it is also embedded in human intellect from the beginning.<sup>12</sup>

Theophrastus considers that the mixture of the potential intellect with the active intellect in the human soul causes impurity on the part of the active intellect. The reason for this is that the human intellect does not always think, although he claims that the active intellect is present in the human soul once and for all.<sup>13</sup>

However, it seems to be impossible to see what role Theophrastus ascribes to the active principle, for we have only some fragments of his writings on this. The interpretation of Theophrastus by Priscianus allows us to say that the human intellect itself produces the objects of thinking from the matter-bound objects of knowledge. On this base Barbotin sees a theory of abstraction in Theophrastus, and naturally in Aristotle. However, Aristotle does not use the term *abstraction* in this connection and we also say that the parallel that Aristotle draws between sensation and thinking leaves no justification for the acceptance of such a theory. For *affection* could hardly be thought to include abstraction.<sup>14</sup>

I believe Theophrastus is right in his attempt to understand what role could be ascribed to the active intellect. He has also tremendous reservations about the purely passive role which Aristotle gives to the intellect where thinking takes place. In addition to that, he takes the view that an external active principle is also responsible for the presence of such a principle in the human intellect. However, we have here two forms



of connection with an external active principle. Theophrastus speaks of the connection between the active and passive intellect in terms of mixture whereas Barbotin considers the connection between the two intellects in terms of participation. But as we come to forms of participation of the human intellect in an external intellect - non-human or supra-human or call it God - we could render it in two ways which are totally opposed to one another. In the first form of participation the human intellect is supplied once and for all with a faculty in virtue of which it exercises its activities independently. In the second form of participation almost no autonomy is given to the human intellect. Therefore, it is continually and constantly acted on by an external-active principle. In this case the human intellect is totally passive. In other words, it just waits to be acted upon by an external principle. It is in a sense a very enigmatic form of participation or perhaps a mystical way of participation.

In virtue of its passivity, the human intellect is left to the mercy of an external agent to enable it to think, to understand or to take part in any intellectual activities. But in the former type of participation which takes the immanence of a transcendent intellect in the human soul for granted, the human intellect is required to acquire at some point in time an active role whereas in the second way of participation the intellect is always the object of the action of a transcendent intellect. In this form of participation the human intellect is also allowed to obtain such a causative power itself, and it appears that Theophrastus advocates the first form of participation.<sup>15</sup> ( See sections on perception and thinking in Chapter 3 where I have argued the relation between the two)

### **3. God and Intellect: Alexander Aphrodisiensis**

Unfortunately, we do not possess early writings of Peripatetics, so it is difficult to get a clear view even of their own philosophical opinions, let alone to be precise on

how they have construed Aristotle's theory of intellect. Nevertheless it appears that they had divergent views over the matter: for example, Strato dismissed any sort of thinking and he even went further and abolished the entire domain of the intellect. It is reported that Aristoxenus and Dicaearchus followed a similar path.<sup>16</sup> (Strato's reduction of thinking to perception is not without any foundation. See particularly *De Anima* And *Metaphysics* XII.7.g)

As opposed to the attitude of early Peripatetics, the members of the Peripatetic school in the first and second centuries AD devoted themselves to understanding, and explaining Aristotle's philosophy. One of the most important writings from this period are those of Alexander Aphrodisiensis. He is mainly concerned with Aristotle's theory of the soul. According to him, *nous poietikos* is a purely immaterial substance and it is also separate from the human being. However, it acts upon the human being and as such *nous poietikos* is the first principle of all things. It is the divine intellect itself. It is only through its direct influence on the individual that one can gain actual knowledge. However, there is also an important point to mention, which is this: the acquisition of knowledge depends on the capacity for receiving this influence. In other words, although the human being acquires knowledge through the influence of *nous poietikos* there is a requirement on the side of the human being which must have the capacity to receive this influence, and that in turn depends on a certain mixture of elements in the human body. Therefore, in Alexander's view, the existence of soul is dependent on the body. The body is necessary for the soul to think, to exist and the soul with the body is mortal. The characterisation of the active intellect in Alexander is this:

- i) It is incorruptible.<sup>17</sup>
- ii) It is not mixed with any matter in any way.<sup>18</sup>
- iii) The active intellect as such is shown by Aristotle to be the first cause which is



the intellect in its true sense.<sup>19</sup>

iv) It makes the intelligible actual and it actualises the material intellect.<sup>20</sup>

v) It is not a part of our soul nor a faculty of it.<sup>21</sup>

vi) To know its existence depends upon our recognition of God.<sup>22</sup>

We should also note that Alexander calls the capacity to receive the influence of the *nous poietikos* the *material intellect (nous hulikos)*, which is retained from *De Anima* 430a 10-13, 19 and accepted by the Arabs. Alexander had a great reputation as an exemplary exegete. Thus many followed him and as a result of this the active intellect has come to be identified with God by almost all Islamic interpreters. Nevertheless, some others came to claim that the *nous poietikos* should be identified with immediately known propositions and the truths that follow from them.<sup>23</sup> In accepting this belief, they went against Alexander and Theophrastus. The basis for the latter interpretation comes from the last chapter of *Posterior Analytics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* which are: 89a 1, 89b 7, 100b 8 and 1139b 17, 1141a 5.

Alexander was regarded as the greatest elaborator of Aristotle's philosophy. He was also known to later generations as an exemplary exegete until Averroes took over that title. Alexander wrote at the end of the second century AD and the beginning of the third. The emperors Septimius, Severus and Caracalla appointed him as a publicly-funded teacher of Aristotelian philosophy between 198 and 209 AD. The most interesting and most important thing is that Alexander was not committed to Platonism or Christianity, unlike some later commentators. His aim was to construe statements of Aristotle in the light of what he says elsewhere. He agrees with Aristotle that there is a single objectively true account of reality. Thus, Alexander comes to equate objective truth and Aristotle's philosophy.<sup>24</sup>

As has just been stated, Alexander identifies *nous poietikos* of *De Anima* with

the First Cause of *Metaphysics* XII, namely, with the intellect of God. Thus he broke away from earlier interpretations and presented a radical interpretation of Aristotle's theory of intellect. Although Ross argues against Alexander's conception of the matter he is not completely convincing: still, it should be noted that some scholars firmly rejected Alexander's view, but later came very close to advocating a similar theory.<sup>25</sup>

As we have noted above, Alexander identifies *nous poietikos* with the Prime Mover, *to proton aition*. But it is interesting that only a few modern scholars have come to agree with him on this point, for example Clark, Guthrie, Nuyens and Anscombe. However, Ross argues purely for the deistic theory of *Metaphysics*.<sup>26</sup> However, against this deistic view one could say that the divine *nous* in *Metaphysics* XII is called the "Prime Mover"<sup>27</sup> and originates change by being loved (1072b 3). Thus it seems that there is some sort of relation between the *Prime Mover* and the universe.<sup>28</sup>

Here I will briefly discuss Guthrie's view. According to him the First Cause, God, is the principle of activity for human thinking. In a way it calls latent human intellects or thoughts into activity. Therefore God originates the process of knowing, it realises the operation which is prior to thinking proper. In opposition to that, some think that *nous poietikos* (430a12) is a part of the human intellect.<sup>29</sup> However, Alexander's view is very much followed by Islamic interpreters of Aristotle and Guthrie has also come to take up a very close position to them, Islamic commentators maintain that a supra-human intellect, which is absolutely subordinate to the intellect of God brings latent human thought into actuality. As I have tried to prove in Chapters III and V, *nous poietikos* seems to be identical with the divine *nous* of *Metaphysics* XII.7-9.

In Alexander's view the divine *nous* is the principle of activity and the human *nous* could participate in the principle of activity, namely the divine *nous*, as long as it prepares itself to receive the influence of the divine *nous*. Thus the principle of activity



is external to the human being. The passivity of the human intellect is absolute without the divine *nous*. But Themistius rejects such a view on the ground that the First Cause cannot be the active intellect. According to him, the active intellect is described as immortal and eternal, and these attributes are also ascribed to other divine beings.<sup>30</sup> Themistius interprets what Aristotle says on the subject as seeing that among the human faculties only the *nous poietikos* is immortal and eternal. One objection to this view is put by pointing out that in *De Anima* III.4 and III.5, Aristotle merely contrasts the *nous poietikos* with the potential *nous*. Furthermore, he contrasts the actualised potential *nous* of the individual being with the active *nous*. Therefore it is not necessary to ask whether there could be other immortal and eternal intellects as far as *De Anima* III.4 and III.5 is concerned.<sup>31</sup>

As to the discussion about making potential colour actual colour, Themistius points out that Aristotle compares the active *nous* to light, but not to the sun as Plato does. However, the point is that Aristotle assigns the same function to light as Plato ascribes to the sun and this function is to make potential colour actual colour.<sup>32</sup> As a result, many interpreters have come to advocate the view that the distinction between two kinds of *nous* should be within the soul.<sup>33</sup>

#### **4. The Objects of Intellect in Alexander and Themistius**

Many of the later interpretations of Aristotle agree that the human intellect is not passive. In this regard they closely follow Alexander's views. Thus the human intellect is considered to realise the act of knowing in relation to sense data. However, it is only able to do so in virtue of the influence of the divine intellect which is somehow and in some way external to the human intellect and immaterial. As far as Alexander and Themistius are concerned, we could speak of two types of the objects of thinking. But it

is hard to justify such a distinction because Aristotle does not speak of them in *De Anima* III.4 and III.5. In these chapters Aristotle nowhere states that there are compound substances and simple substances which account for the immaterial and material objects of thinking. As opposed to that, he is concerned with the question of how forms can reside in matter.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, Alexander distinguishes two kinds of object of thinking and the distinction plays a very important role in his interpretation of Aristotle. This distinction has a very profound role in almost all Neoplatonic interpretations of Aristotle too.<sup>35</sup>

Alexander holds that the human intellect has the capacity to make the object of sensation an object of thinking. In a sense the human intellect produces the object of thinking by separating intelligible knowledge from sensory knowledge. What this means is that the human intellect operates as a maker or producer of the intelligible objects. It is this process or operation of the intellect that provides universals. And the universal is obtained from the particular. In sum, it could be said that the human intellect produces its own object of thinking. However, Alexander also states that the Unmoved Mover, the divine *nous*, is the principle for everything to be known which is not by nature knowable. In other words the Unmoved Mover causes everything else to be known. If that is the case, the function which is assigned to the human intellect is either needless or else presents inconsistency at best.

In sum, Alexander regards human thinking as identification with the immaterial objects, but the human intellect is also capable of knowing material objects by the process of abstraction. Moreover, human thinking in essence is related to something which transcends the human intellect that in turn transcends itself and becomes like what it is affected by. In other words, the human intellect identifies itself with the divine *nous*.



The main point of Alexander's interpretation of Aristotle's theory of intellect is that human thinking is not a form of affection. According to him, thinking is a combining of that which is universal in the many individual things. It is also interesting to note that Alexander connects the concept of passivity or affection to corporeality. He goes even further by saying that even sensation is not completely affection. It is an act of discerning and being, as such it should not be conceived as an affection. He regards affection as a secondary aspect of thinking. According to him, thinking in essence is active.<sup>36</sup>

Like Theophrastus, Alexander also refuses to regard thinking as an affection or a form of passivity. They both consider the intellect as an active principle. However, Theophrastus conceives the principle of activity as being immanent in the human being, but that does not mean that he does not postulate an external intellect which is ultimately the originator of the activity of thinking in the human intellect. Alexander identifies it with divine *nous* (Prime Mover or First Cause).<sup>37</sup> However, in Alexander's view the union of the human *nous* with divine *nous* does not constitute immortality on the side of the former, whereas the divine *nous* is absolutely immortal.<sup>38</sup> Thus the human intellect is not guaranteed any immortality. As long as the human intellect receives the influence from the divine *nous*, it can be blissful but when it is left alone it is like a man or woman sitting in a room in the dark. When electricity is turned on he or she is in the light but in the absence of light one is in the dark. However, the capacity or preparation of the intellect is part of the activity of the human *nous*. Does that mean that one should turn on her/his electricity her/himself? Is this the only active role to be played by the human being? But one thing is certain: in Alexander the human intellect is not capable of joining once and for all in the divine *nous*. The divine *nous* could reside in the human intellect in so far as the human intellect is perfect enough to receive it. As

opposed to Theophrastus, Alexander appears to be less concerned with granting the principle of activity, namely, any divinity to the human being. Therefore if one has to talk about the form of participation with divine intellect in Alexander, it must be the sort of participation which is not genetic.

Themistius maintains that the *nous poietikos* which Aristotle speaks of in *De Anima* III.5 belongs to a human faculty.<sup>39</sup> On this point his view diverges from Alexander. Instead, Themistius attributes two kinds of intellect to the human being, which are the potential intellect and an intellect which acts upon it.<sup>40</sup> He insists on the unity of the two intellects.<sup>41</sup> He also defends the view that through the union the human being becomes the possessor of an active intellect once and for all.<sup>42</sup> For he sees the essence of being human in this unity.<sup>43</sup> More clearly, the human 'I' is represented in the active intellect which comes to be possessed.<sup>44</sup> However, on this basis one is not sure any more whether the transcendency of the active intellect has any function at all. It appears that he emphasises the immanence of the active intellect rather than its transcendency. Nevertheless, he holds that there is an intellect which is one in number, that all human intellects participate in it. For otherwise it would be impossible for individuals to reach any agreement with one another. Themistius' view about the immanence of the active intellect involves a genetic type of participation, but this participation is not through the influence of the active intellect but possessing it as a part of the human faculty. The problem Themistius faces is the multitude of the active intellects, and he himself finds it difficult to accept this. It cannot be supported by the principle of individuation because the active intellect is immaterial and he accepts that the principle of individuation is matter.

Themistius tries to solve the problem of the multiplication of the active intellect by offering a comparison which is as follows: the first intellect is one in number, it is



numerically one. On the contrary, that which illuminates and which is illuminated in turn becomes manifold, i.e. that light is manifold, whereas the sun is one.<sup>45</sup> It appears that Themistius' example just conceals the source of the problem. In my opinion, the comparison with the sun and its light in fact does not solve the problem. For the rays of the sun are merely the effect of the sun, and as such they do not represent any independence and purity from the sun but in turn independence and purity simply characterise the sun. In this context, one cannot talk of a plurality but just the active intellect and its influence. I think that the analogy suits rather better to illustrate Alexander's view on the intellect than Themistius'.

When we come to discuss the immortality of the intellect in the human being, we shall see that Alexander follows Aristotle more closely than Themistius. As we have said earlier, Themistius speaks of the unity of the potential human intellect with the active intellect. But he cannot have ignored the fact that Aristotle speaks of the immaterial and imperishable intellect while the passive intellect which is discussed at the end of *De Anima* III.5 is called corruptible.<sup>46</sup>

## **5. Neoplatonism and Aristotle: Introductory Remarks**

The interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy by Alexander marks the fullest flowering of the Aristotelian philosophical tradition, but the view of Themistius is far from being unsupported. He thought that the job of commentary was over. It appears that he was wrong, because Neoplatonists were to introduce new dimensions into the interpretations of Aristotle's philosophy. Themistius' relation to the Neoplatonists has not been settled yet. Philoponus' *Physics* draws on Themistius six hundred times. That might indicate a strong relation between Themistius' view and Neoplatonism but, as it has been said, the matter is controversial in many ways.<sup>47</sup>

Between AD 200 and 600 one of the ways of involving oneself in philosophical activity was to write commentaries. The works which were produced during this period contain the writings of the Peripatetic and Neoplatonist schools, so the writings from this period present a panorama of every period of Ancient Greek philosophy. However, the great bulk of extant commentaries belong to the Neoplatonists. Neoplatonism was founded by Plotinus and, apart from him, many of the distinguished Neoplatonists wrote commentaries on Aristotle, among them Iamblichus, Plutarchus, Proclus, Damascius, Plotinus' disciple and editor Porphyry, Dexippus, Syrianus, Proclus' pupil Ammonius and Ammonius' three disciples Philoponus, Simplicius and Asclepius, Olympiodorus, Elias, David, Stephanus. Some of them were Christians, for example Philoponus, Elias, David and Stephanus. Although they were Christians, nevertheless they wrote in the Neoplatonist tradition. However, the Neoplatonist commentaries of the main group were set up by Porphyry. Plotinus, who was Porphyry's master, had criticised Aristotle. For example, he devoted three whole treatises of *Enneads* to him and he discussed Aristotle's classification of the things in the universe into categories. Until Porphyry the question had been how far a Platonist should agree with Aristotle's theory of categories. However, by the time of Porphyry the question became whether there was any harmony between Plato and Aristotle at all.<sup>48</sup> It might appear to someone as a very difficult task to realise. However, it proved very fruitful from the philosophical point of view, but all Neoplatonists were in favour of reconciling Plato with Aristotle. Although Iamblichus argued against the view that Aristotle disapproved of Plato's Theory of Ideas, this was also unacceptable to Syrianus and Proclus. While they accept that there is a harmony between Plato and Aristotle on most things, at the same time they could see that it is impossible to argue for a complete harmony between Plato and Aristotle. In Plato, God was conceived to be responsible - causally - for the existence of



the universe whereas Aristotle just denied it. But for some even this did not present any disharmony; for example, Ammonius claimed that Aristotle accepted Plato's theory of ideas in the form of principles in the divine intellect and these principles were the cause of existence. He thus wrote a book to prove that Aristotle's God was also an efficient cause.<sup>49</sup> It was this claim that paved the way towards accepting God as a Creator, as St. Thomas Aquinas did.<sup>50</sup> As a result of this great effort, Aristotle was made safe for Christianity.

After establishing harmony between Plato and Aristotle, the aim became to find harmony in the whole of Greek philosophy. In other words, the idea of harmony was extended to the Pro-Socratics. For example, Proclus tried to unify the whole of Greek philosophy. For him, it was a continuous clarification of divine revelation. Simplicius, on the other hand, sought to unify the whole of Greek philosophy in order to rebut the Christian criticism that pagan philosophy contained contradictions.

I would now like to make some remarks on the relation of Neoplatonist commentators to the Christians. The relation was subtle and it was not always a happy one. For example, Porphyry wrote a book against Christianity which was destined to be burnt. We have come to think that later Neoplatonists were more circumspect. Boethius and Philoponus are among the last commentators. Philoponus tries to prove the doctrine of the Creation and tries to replace Aristotelian science with other rival theories. These theories were preserved by the Arabs and reached the West only in the sixteenth century.

As stated above, the relations of Neoplatonist commentators with the Christians were not always happy. It is claimed that the Neoplatonists did not abandon the distinction between the One and the intellect in favour of Christian monotheism and this appears to be true. For the Christian Emperor Justinian stopped the teaching of

Simplicius and the whole pagan Neoplatonist school in Athens in 529. It was during this same year that the Christian Philoponus proclaimed his evidence of Creation against the Neoplatonist Proclus. The Athenian Neoplatonists left and did not return to Athens. It has been claimed that Simplicius went to Harran (Carrhae) which is in Turkey now.<sup>51</sup>

The commentaries written by Simplicius are highly regarded. They are considered to be a treasure house of information about a thousand years of Greek philosophy. He recorded them painstakingly after the closure of the Neoplatonist school in Athens. His bitterness towards Christianity is very understandable; Simplicius considers Christianity and its representatives irreverent.<sup>52</sup>

## 6. **Intellect and Existence: Philoponus**

The answer to the question of how Neoplatonism was born could be found in the divergent interpretations of Aristotle's philosophy. In other words, it might be said that untenable interpretations of Aristotle helped the birth of Neoplatonism.

Philoponus, the representative of Neoplatonism, opposes Alexander's view that the active intellect of *De Anima* III.5 is the First Cause. He dismisses any identification of the *nous poietikos* with the God of *Metaphysics* XII.7-9. According to Philoponus the First Cause does not only actualise a potentiality, but also gives existence to the universe. therefore, in his view, Aristotle would not have compared the active intellect to light in *De Anima* III.5 if he had been talking about the mind of God. He overlooks the fact that the Unmoved mover is not a creative cause or a Creator itself in *Metaphysics* XII.7-9. It is said to be the cause in terms of having power to attract, in other words it affects things by its power of attraction. It is, I believe, quite obvious that the God of Philoponus is not Aristotle's God but the God of Christianity.

The interpretation of *De Anima* given by Philoponus is as follows:



- i) The *nous poietikos* belongs to an individual human being.
- ii) It functions in the way the teacher does.
- iii) The teacher does not pass on knowledge but he/she removes the obstacles in the way of having already existing knowledge.
- iv) The knowledge is hidden; the function of the teacher or the *nous poietikos* is to make known the already existing knowledge.

The last point is definitely reminiscent of Plato. And what cannot be denied is this: it does not explain the interpretation of *De Anima* III.4 and 5. Aristotle does not speak of "the theory of remembering" there.<sup>53</sup>

When we come to Simplicius, one thing we notice is that he emphasises the immanence of the active intellect. Part of this claim ignores the fact that a potentiality and the actuality of this potentiality cannot reside side by side in the same being. Nevertheless, the relation between divine intellect and human intellect was taken to be a direct relation. On the contrary, the human potential intellect is concerned with knowing physical things. For, by having the potential intellect, the human intellect cannot know the purely immaterial. It appears that beginning with Theophrastus and onwards the Greek commentators were unable to eliminate certain Platonic and Neoplatonic presuppositions from Aristotle's philosophy. Perhaps these untenable interpretations of Aristotle's philosophy played a significant part in the birth of Neoplatonism.<sup>54</sup>

Whatever caused the birth of Neoplatonism, one thing is certain: from then on, Plato and Aristotle constituted the starting point for the Christian and Muslim philosophers or, more correctly, theologians.

## 7. Plotinus, *Nous*, Experience

Some Preliminaries:

Themistius argued that Aristotle cannot be referring to the Unmoved Mover of Metaphysics in *De Anima* III.5 where he speaks of *nous poietikos* which is called to be immortal and eternal. According to him these attributes also belong to other divine beings. (*De Anima* III.5, 430 a 23; Themistius 10 3, 9-13; 103, 13-15). It would not be wrong to say that Islamic Aristotelians followed Themistius closely in their conception of *nous poietikos*; since they never identified it God but as a subordinate intellect to God. For them *nous poietikos* was one of the divine intelligences. Being as such, *nous poietikos* was conceived as a necessary chain between the human individual and God.

Although the question of how the individual human intellect participates in the mind of God does not arise in Aristotle, Islamic Aristotelians were immensely interested in the question. It is possible to speak of two kinds of participation: a) ontological participation, b) cognitive participation. In the case of the first type of participation the human individual is endowed once and for all with a faculty which from then on it exercises independently. (For example Aquinas) In the second type of participation the human intellect is the object of the action of a super-intellect.

In the first type of participation the human soul acquires at some point in time a certain causative power in virtue of the imminence of a transcendent intellect. In the second sort of participation the intellect is subject to the effect proceeding from the transcendent intellect since it does not possess it itself. Of Islamic Aristotelians, the second type of participation was acceptable since they generally refused to conceive *nous poietikos* as being identical with God. In addition to that they discarded any possibility of participating in the mind of God directly.



Islamic Aristotelians generally hold that non-discursive thought and the union with the transcendent intellect require some preparation of a discursive nature (see sections on Islamic Philosophers in chapter 7). It cannot be denied that experience has an important role in knowing the highest principle (Nicomachean Ethics 1142 a 11-20; 1143 b 11-14). However, it is not true that experience does belong to the domain of discursive reasoning in Aristotle. Experience happens in the sphere of the senses. (Metaphysics, 891 a 1-12). It seems to be that Islamic Aristotelians do not follow Aristotle here. He aimed to base discursive science on a non-discursive knowing. Thus, these philosophers appear to have distorted what Aristotle says on the subject by the Neoplatonic interpretations.

Islamic Aristotelian philosophers argued that the participation of the human intellect in a super-intellect is a union with the latter and can only be achieved with great effort. However, they never regarded the union with a super-intellect as complete. That is why the union with a super-intellect had to be brought about each time afresh. In other words a living and recurring participation necessitates intellectual perfection. Nevertheless this should not be taken that Islamic Aristotelian philosophers completely disregard the first form of participation. They thought that the human intellect can carry out an abstracting operation in virtue of its union with a super-intellect (Brentano, 11 ; 16 n – 44 and see section on Avicenna).

The super-intellect is a necessary precondition for the human intellect to know and for the latter the super-intellect is an aim to be united. For the super-intellect not only inspires the human intellect but it is also the source of knowledge. That is why the aim of intellectual activity is to succeed a union with the super-intellect.

For Islamic Aristotelian philosophers the immanence of the super-intellect in the human soul requires to be brought about each time afresh. That is why it is

impossible to say that the super-intellect is joined to the human soul. It does not belong to the human soul from the outset. However, it is interesting to see that according to them the essence of being a human being lies in the super-intellect as long as the human intellect succeeds a union with it. (Nicomachean Ethics, X.7; 1178 a 2-8; De Anima 424 b 2; 427 a 14-16; Themistius 108, 24).

## 8. Plotinus and Thinking

In Plotinus we find two kinds of *noetic* activity of the intellect which are called discursive (*dianoia*) and non-discursive (*nous*). Although discursive *noetic* activity is related to the soul non-discursive *noetic* activity is conceived to be something different. It has been generally considered that non-discursive *noetic* activity does not involve propositions but contemplation of concepts in isolation from each other. It has been commonly held that Plotinus' conception of non-discursive *noetic* activity is to be traced back to Plato and Aristotle.

I firstly would like to deal with the question of eternity and *noetic* activity in Plotinus. Secondly I intend to elucidate the concept of non-discursive *noetic* activity in Plotinus and argue that as Plotinus does, contemplation cannot be the mean to contact reality. In that respect he continuously transformed Aristotle's conception of non-discursive *noetic* activity of the intellect. Plotinus certainly believed that propositional discursive *noetic* activity cannot lead us to know, to be identical with reality. Perhaps this sort of *noetic* activity should be placed above any sort of thinking. And it will be clear in chapter 7 that Islamic Aristotelian philosophers followed Plotinus closely in this respect. They were greatly, particularly Ghazali and Suhrawardi, dissatisfied with discursive way of knowing things.

Philo who lived in the first century of AD argued that there are two kinds of



life, one of which is of the intelligible realm and the other of that is of the sensible world. (Philo, de Mut. Nom. 47, 267).

When we come to Plotinus we see that he also speaks of two different kinds of life: the life of time and the life of eternity. Of course the life of eternity signifies that *nous* is identical with its objects. Plotinus speaks of three levels of reality: soul, intellect and the One. Soul is of the sensible world and it is temporal whereas intellect is conceived to be eternal. The One is treated to be beyond these two, namely soul and intellect, although it is defined in terms of *aidior* and *aei*.

It is interesting to see that Plotinus identifies the life of the soul with time and the life of the intellect with eternity. He distinguishes the *noetic* activity of the intellect from the activity of the soul and connects thinking with eternity. The life of the intellect is a life of *noetic* activity. This *noetic* activity is a very special kind and is not temporal. Plotinus writes of eternity saying that it (*aion*) is:

... never other and is not a thinking or life that goes from one thing to another but is always the self-same without extension of interval; seeing all this one sees eternity in seeing a life that abides in the same, and always has the all present to it, not now this, and then again that, but all things at once, and not now some things, and then again others, but a partless completion, as if they move all together in a point, and had not yet begun to go out and then into lives; it is something which abides in the same in itself and does not change at all but is always in the present, because nothing of it has passed away, nor again is there anything to come into being, but that which it is, it is, .... (Loeb, 3.7.3 (16-23)).

It is not difficult to see the parallel between the definition of eternity in Plotinus and description of the Unmoved Mover in Aristotle. The latter is said to be always active yet remains the same as being eternally existing. Although the Unmoved Mover is the principle of the universe and the cause of the motion in the universe it is not subject to time.

And Plotinus also writes about time that:

So would it be sense to say that time is the life of soul in a movement of passage from one way of life to another? Yes, for eternity is life at rest, unchanging and identical

and already unbounded, .... (3.7.11 (43-9; 45-47)).

Time, according to Plotinus, is a mere copy of eternity which is a life, is unchangeable and is undermined by anything else (3.7.11 (45-47)).

It should be recalled that although Aristotle describes the human *noetic* activity and divine *noetic* activity as *energeia* the latter one is necessarily so and has no relation to *kinesis* whereas the former must take place within time. It is possible to see *energeia* of physical beings as a mere copy of the activity of the eternal being, the Unmoved Mover but not identical with each other.

Although the soul and intellect are conceived to be a sort of world-soul and world-intellect in Plotinus nevertheless they can be found within the individual human being. That is why he argues that an individual can ascend from the kind of thinking of the soul to the *noetic* activity of the intellect, and finally to a union with the One. This is what I am going to consider in the next section.

## 9. Toward the Union with the One

AC Lloyd argues that the idea of non-discursive *noetic* thought is not coherent. In other words it is incoherent. Sorabji appears to be sensibly, if I may say so, dissatisfied with any conception of it too. But he does not deny that there may be non-discursive *noetic* activity which is beyond any thinking. For he thinks that any thinking must be propositional even non-discursive.

I have tried to argue in the previous chapters that Sorabji appears to be mistaken that any thought must be propositional. However, he seems to be right in thinking that when the intellect is identical with its object there is no difference between the intellect and its object. In other words the intellect and the object is identical. They are one thing. And Sorabji rightly argues that this is surely not any



sort of thinking in the way we understand it.

My aim here is not to deal with Lloyd's understanding of non-discursive thought nor mainly justify Sorabji's claim, but to present Plotinus' view on the subject matter in order to shed light on non-discursive *noetic* activity in general. Plotinus speaks of three kinds of *noetic* experience which are: a) discursive (*dianoia*); b) non-discursive; c) the identity of intellect with the One, a union. He identifies the discursive *noetic* experience with the activity of the soul whereas non-discursive *noetic* experience corresponds to the domain of the intellect. The identity of intellect with the One is a final stage that one can attain to and in this stage there is no thinking.

It is important to recall that an important feature of discursive thinking is that it includes change. In other words the soul moves from one thing to another. In addition to that this kind of thinking happens to take place in time. As opposed to non-discursive *noetic* activity, discursive *noetic* activity involves contemplating imprinted images (3.7. 11; 5.3.2; 5.3.5 (23-5)).

Unlike discursive activity, non-discursive *noetic* activity is not spread out in time. It is timeless. There is no extension and progress in it. He also claims that it does not involve seeking (*zetein*) (4.4.1; 3.7.3; 5.1.4 (16)). Plotinus also declares that the intellect in action is identical with its objects (1.8.2 (16); 5.1.4 (21)). What follows from these statements are the following:

- a) The intellect does not depend on images. For the intellect is identical with its objects.
- b) In non-discursive activity there is no gap between what is known and knowing.
- c) The intellect thinks itself; since the intellect is identical with its object, thus in thinking of its object, the intellect thinks of itself.

It is not difficult to trace back these ideas to Aristotle. However, what we do

not find in Aristotle explicitly is the conception of a union with the One. Aristotle nowhere explicitly or implicitly appears to be concerned with the union of intellects with the Unmoved Mover or God. But this constitutes a major theme in Plotinus' thought. And in virtue of the specific background of their thought Islamic Aristotelian philosophers followed Plotinus very closely as it will be seen in chapter 7.

Plotinus rejects any sort of divergence between the intellect and the One. It seems that he even denies that the intellect cannot say that 'I am this'. For I and the this will constitute two things. It means duality which Plotinus denies in thinking where there is a complete union between the intellect and the One. In order to overcome this, this one would have to say that 'am am' or 'I I' (5.3.10 c 34.7). In 6.7.38 Plotinus says that one cannot also say that 'I am the good'. Again this would introduce too much duality into the union of the intellect with the One. As Aristotle does, Plotinus argues that what is dealt with here is of simple nature. It is also true that the One signifies what it is to be simple. Again as Aristotle does, Plotinus uses the analogy of touch or contact in order to describe the sort of thinking in question (*thixis*, *thingein*, *thinganein*, *haphe*, *ephapsasthai*, *epaphe*, *sunaphe*) (5.3.10 (41-4); 5.3.17 (25-34); 6.7.36 (4); 6.7.39 (15-19); 6.7.40 (2)). This touching is not aimed at something other than simple and as I have argued previously touching in this context does not describe discursive thinking. That is why Plotinus says insistently that the One is simple and its thinking is not thinking in the ordinary sense of the word (3.9. (1); 5.3.13 (10); 5.4.2 (18); 5.6. 4-5). And when the intellect becomes identical with the One it does not think. In a sense the process of thinking is completed. Again this reminds us of Aristotle's description of thinking as *energeia*. Everything is completed. There is nowhere to be reached. The union with the One is the end of the road for the intellect. And I call this type of thinking as perfect non-discursive thinking



(*Hupernoesis* (6.8.16 (33))).

One of the crucial passages which reveals Plotinus' ideas on the subject matter comes from V.3.10 (28-52):

.... what will the thinker think which does not contain one and then another? For certainly if each one is a rational principle, it is many. So it comes to know itself by being an eye which sees a variety of images or by being an object of varied colours. For if it is directed its gaze to a single object without parts, it would be without thought or word for what would it have to say about it, or to understand? For if the absolutely partless had to speak itself, it must, first of all, say what it is not; so that in this way too it would be many in order to be one. then when it says 'I am this', if it means something other than itself by 'this', it will be telling a lie; but if it is speaking of some incidental property of itself, it will be saying that it is many or saying 'am am' or 'I I'. Well then, suppose it was only two things and said 'I and this'. It would be already necessary for it to be many; for as the two things are diverse and in the manner of their diversity, number is present and many other things. Then here the thinker must approach one thing different from another and the object of thought in being thought must contain variety; or there will not be a thought of it, but only a touching and a sort of contact without speech or thought, pre-thinking because intellect has not yet come into being and that which touches does not think. But the thinker must not itself remain simple, especially in so far as it thinks itself: for it will duplicate itself, even if it gives an understanding which is silent. Then [the One] will not need to make a kind of fuss about itself: for what will it learn by thinking itself? For what it is will belong to itself before intellect thinks. Also, knowledge is a kind of longing for the absent, and like the discovery made by a seeker. But that which is absolutely different remains itself by itself, and seeks nothing about itself; but that which explicates itself must be many.

Is the description of the One which engages in perfect non-discursive noetic activity other than the Aristotle's Unmoved Mover? I believe that it is not hard to see that it is not. Plotinus speaks of the *noetic* activities that take the individual human being towards a union with the One in 1.3 1-4. Those who love music and those who love in true sense are to be a candidate on the way ascend to the One. Philosophers are necessarily so by their nature. Discursive preparation forms one side of training. Moral training is also required. Plotinus himself practised intellectual and moral training in order to be united with the One. It is said that he had little food and slept little.

No doubt that his ideas had enormous influence on Islamic Aristotelian

philosophers as well as Christian mystics. It is especially important to remember Ghazali and Suhrawardi. They both finally were greatly dissatisfied with merely discursive *noetic* activity and involved in some sort of mystical religious movement. (See sections on Islamic philosophers). Ghazali even wrote a book on 'Inconsistency of Philosophy and Philosophers' to show that a pure discursive activity is nothing but incoherent understanding of reality. In order to know reality one must first turn to somewhere else.

## **10. The Road from Philosophy to Islam**

### **Introduction**

The flowering of philosophy in the Islamic world started around the 8th century AD. This period is called a 'First Wave of Hellenism'. At this time the majority of Muslim religious scholars accepted Greek ideas enthusiastically. Later, however, they made no attempt to go further with their explorations of Greek philosophy. They became rather self-satisfied. As a result of that, almost all intellectual activity was confined to criticising or assimilating what was available in Islamic works. But this period did not last long. The second wave of the Hellenic tide started around the 10th century AD. During this century small intellectual groups continued to cultivate philosophy. They were interested in Greek medicine and the other sciences. It is important to see that although the Muslim students of philosophy were sincere in their beliefs, they were far from being fanatical followers of Islam. In virtue of this, Muslims and Christians came to be associated on equal terms in philosophical discussions as well as in teaching.

However, the question of how exactly the intellectual transition from translation to the composition of original works took place is not completely clear. It is possible to assume that the scholars who engaged in translation felt impelled to write something



original and to provide a simple introduction to Greek science and philosophy. Above all, there was a great desire to bring philosophical conclusions into line with the teaching of the Quran. The representative of this transition and this ambition is Abu-Yusuf Yaqub Ibn-Ishaq al-Kindi, but he is usually referred to as al-Kindi. He is regarded as the first important Islamic philosopher.<sup>55</sup>

The second wave of Hellenism, is marked by the outstanding achievements of Avicenna (Ibn-Sina) in both philosophy and medicine. Through the influence of his work, further Greek conceptions and methods were accepted into Islamic theology, mainly by the work of al-Ghazali.

Aristotle constituted the starting point for Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Avicenna and for Averroes (Ibn-Rushd). Apart from Aristotle's works, some post-Aristotelian Greek texts and early Arabic texts provided the setting in which they worked. The most important texts for them were the following:

1. Alexander, *De Anima*. There is also a work called *De Intellectu* which is also attributed to Alexander.<sup>56</sup>
2. Plotinus, *Enneads*.<sup>57</sup>
3. Themistius, *De Anima*.<sup>58</sup> It should be noted also that Themistius' *Paraphrase of Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Book XII, was intensively studied by Islamic scholars.<sup>59</sup>
4. There is also another Greek commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*, which is commonly attributed to John Philoponus. In addition to this, there is a commentary on Book III of *De Anima*, ascribed to Philoponus.<sup>60</sup>

The two works of Alexander - *De Anima* and *De Intellectu* - and Themistius' paraphrase of Aristotle's *De Anima* and *Metaphysics* XII were available to the Islamic philosophers in Arabic. Of these works, only *De Intellectu* and Aristotle's *De Anima* by Themistius are preserved and published. However, manuscripts of the Arabic translations of

Alexander's *De Anima* and paraphrase of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* XII by Themistius are no longer extant. Avicenna speaks of the views of Alexander and Themistius. Averroes also refers to them on the subject of soul.<sup>61</sup>

Although the works of Plotinus were very much in circulation - parts of the *Enneads* - they did not know it by name. *The Theology of Aristotle* was considered by al-Farabi to be Aristotle's work. Avicenna even wrote a commentary on it.<sup>62</sup>

Some other works which were prior to Al-Farabi played an important role as well, for example the paraphrase of Aristotle's *De Anima* by Ishaq ibn Hunain, and the works by Bakr al-Mawsili and al-Kindi. These were mostly from the *First Wave of Greek Philosophy* in the Islamic world. There was also a treatise on the soul, which was ascribed to Porphyry and extant only in Arabic. Avicenna discusses and argues against it strongly.<sup>63</sup>

However, it should be noted that for al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes the most important works amongst the ones we have mentioned were Alexander's *De Anima*, *De Intellectu*, Plotinus' *Enneads*, and Themistius' Paraphrase of Aristotle's *De Anima*.

Before beginning to expound the views of islamic philosophers' interpretation of Aristotle's theory of intellect, I would like to say a few words on terminology. Greek and Arabic have only one word for intellect and intelligence, which is *nous* = *aql*. However, the terms *intellect* and *intelligence*, which originated in the Latin Middle Ages, signify two different things: the term *intelligence* refers to the incorporeal beings that represent celestial spheres which govern the world, but the term *intellect* is used in various contexts. So, in exploring the views of al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes, I will use the terms *intelligence* and *intellect* in accordance with the distinction mentioned above. However, as I have said, there is a single Greek or Arabic word which covers the meaning of the two terms coined in the Latin Middle Ages.<sup>64</sup>



Now let us discover how Aristotle's ideas on intellect have been transformed into Islamic thought through al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes.

#### 11. **Yaqub Ibn-Ishaq al-Kindi (800-70)<sup>65</sup>**

Al-Kindi devoted himself to studying and was considered to be an expert in almost all the Greek sciences. Although many Islamic philosophers were considered to be affected predominantly by Aristotle it would be wrong to think that they had nothing to do with Plato and Neoplatonism. Aristotle was studied carefully, but he was neoplatonised. For example, *The Theology of Aristotle* was very much in circulation among the Muslim scholars and philosophers. We know also that it was attributed to Aristotle by al-Farabi and Avicenna wrote a commentary on it. However, it belongs to the Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus. It was very much revered, perhaps due to the conception of God which was conceived to be very close to the Quranic monotheism. Al-Kindi defended the view that the truths revealed by God through prophets were indeed metaphysical knowledge. Thus he saw no contradiction between philosophy and revelation or religion. Al-Kindi had also no difficulty in inserting the idea of creation into Aristotle by the help of the Neoplatonic theory of emanation. Let us take a close look at al-Kindi's theory of intellect now.

What we find in his *De Intellectu* is the various meanings of the term intellect (*acql*). He firstly speaks of an intellect which is always in action. It is a transcendent intellect. It is not the intellect of God nor does it belong to human beings. The human intellect is placed at the opposite side of the intellect which is always active. But the human intellect has the potentiality to know but in virtue of its potentiality it does not know yet. The only way the human potential intellect attains knowledge is by making contact with the transcendent intellect. And by means of joining the transcendent

intellect, the human intellect becomes able to know immaterial ideas and becomes like the transcendent intellect. The human potential intellect, which becomes like the active transcendent intellect, is identical with the object it thinks. It is an identification with the ideas provided by the active transcendent intellect. However, it is interesting to see that, in al-Kindi's view, the object of knowledge is not identical with the active transcendent intellect. Using a very Neoplatonic idea, he claims that once the immaterial ideas or metaphysical truths become known by the human intellect, they lose their purity. He also speaks of the intellect which possesses knowledge and the intellect which contemplates at its disposal. The distinction of four types of intellect in al-Kindi nearly corresponds to Aristotle's four types of intellect in *De Anima*. In fact it does not appear to be difficult to recognise them in *De Anima*. They are the following:

- a) *Nous poietikos* of *De Anima* III.5.
- b) The potential intellect of *De Anima* III.4.
- c) The intellect which possesses knowledge but is not contemplating it now.
- d) The intellect which actually contemplates it.

The last of the two intellects are distinguished by Aristotle in *De Anima* III.4 also.

I would like to say something about the point al-Kindi makes by saying that when the human potential intellect gains access to the immaterial ideas by joining the transcendent intellect, the immaterial ideas which are known by the human intellect become less pure. Further, the identity of the human intellect with the immaterial ideas provided by or derived from the transcendent intellect does not mean that the human intellect becomes identical with the transcendent intellect. It also rules out any identification of the knowledge or the immaterial ideas with the transcendent intellect. I believe that al-Kindi here introduces very fundamental principles of the *Qu'ran* into Aristotle's theory of intellect. For, according to the *Qu'ran*, God and God's creation



are never to be conceived in a genetic sense. Whatever sort of relation God has to its creation, God is never considered to be identical with what it has created. Things are the proofs of its existence but they are not what God is.

The views of the Islamic philosophers are criticised by Walzer. He thinks that they are not right in taking the *nous poietikos* of *De Anima* III.5 to be a transcendent intellect, and Aristotle himself does not say anything about the transcendency of the *nous poietikos*.

The Islamic philosophers do not identify the *nous poietikos* with the intellect of God either. In other words, they refuse to see the God of *Metaphysics* XII.7-9 and *De Anima* III.5 to be identical with the *nous poietikos*. In general they conceive the *nous poietikos* as one of the intellects which are subordinate to God. According to them, the *nous poietikos* does not represent the highest actuality nor the highest immateriality. In sum, the *nous poietikos* is not the First Cause, it is not God. In effect, the transcendent intellect acts as the vicar of God on earth.

Al-Kindi also speaks of the preparation for union with the active intellect. Here he is much more in line with the Greek commentators. This also indicates where al-Kindi inserts the Neoplatonic element into his interpretation of Aristotle. In Aristotle we have no trace of the element of preparation as far as the potential intellect is concerned. It is also interesting to see that the tendency in al-Kindi and in general in all Islamic philosophers is to try to relate the knowing or thinking activity of the human potential intellect to the active intellect which is conceived to be transcendent to the human intellect.<sup>66</sup>

## 12. Human Perfection and Intellect: Al-Farabi

In al-Farabi's view the perfection of the human being lies in general in intellect.

However, he is bound to distinguish the types of the intellect in order to explain how the human intellect passes from potentiality to actuality. He argues in *al-Siyasa al-Madaniyya* and in *Theology of Aristotle* that human perfection, which consists in the actualisation of the human intellect, cannot be achieved without active intellect. For the human potentiality for thinking cannot by itself become actual intellect. Thus it requires something else to bring it from the state of potentiality into actuality, and that is perforce an intellect which is actual. It is like the vicar of God working on behalf of human beings. Anybody who leaves matter behind and attains freedom comes close to the active intellect. Where the natural forces leave a human being at physical perfection, the active intellect takes over and in perfecting human intellect, the active intellect exercises providence over it.<sup>67</sup> According to al-Farabi there are three levels of human intellect, which are:

1. Natural disposition to think.<sup>68</sup>
2. Actual passive intellect. It is the intellect which has just passed from potentiality to actuality via the active intellect.
3. The third level signifies a perfection. An individual human being perfects his/her passive intellects with all intelligible thoughts and becomes acquired intellect. Although it is extremely difficult to gain the totality of thoughts, nevertheless in al-Farabi's view we are able to do so. It lies within our power to obtain it.<sup>69</sup>

In al-Farabi each stage of intellect seems to be the matter and substratum for the succeeding level. After the succeeding level is realised, the two become one thing. During the union with the active intellect, acquired intellect represents matter for the active intellect, and it appears that the active intellect becomes the form of the acquired intellect. None of the previous commentators conceived the relation between the



acquired and active intellect in the way al-Farabi did. In his account the active intellect conjoins with the human intellect as its form after the highest stage of human intellect is realised. When an individual reaches the phase of the acquired intellect, the active intellect comes into him/her. At this stage an individual becomes a philosopher. However, he refuses to identify the acquired intellect with the active intellect.

According to al-Farabi, immortality is not granted to human beings by God. It is rather a product of the human being's intellectual development. In other words, immortality is not given but earned, perhaps reached. He states that ignorant individuals are mortal. He also speaks of the retention of individuality. In his view the soul and body of each individual are distinct from the souls and bodies of other individuals.

The activity of the active intellect is not confined to the operation on the human intellect. The emanation from the active intellect goes to the human faculty of imagination. In virtue of this, prophecy and revelation become possible.

Al-Farabi speaks of the two levels of prophetic phenomena which are namely 'prophecy' (*nubuwwa*) and 'revelation' (*wahy*). They are both constituted by an emanation from the active intellect upon the imaginative faculty. Revelation is superior to prophecy. Prophecy does not require any specific intellectual attainment. However, revelation requires a conjunction with the active intellect. In a sense prophecy is considered to be granted by the active intellect but revelation could happen to someone who has also reached the stage of the acquired intellect. It rather recalls a philosopher-prophet.<sup>70</sup>

### **13. Avicenna (Abu-Ali Ibn-Sina)**

Philosophy continued flowering throughout the 11th century in the Islamic world but there was a man from a small town near the south coast of the Caspian Sea who has

been considered in the opinion of many to be the greatest of all Islamic philosophers. Although he wrote in Arabic, he was Turkish; this philosopher was Abu-Ali Ibn-Sina but he is known in the West as Avicenna (980-1037).

He spent the early years of his life in Bukhara. His first education was to memorise the Qur'an, however Avicenna was also very well versed in Arabic poetry. He later moved on to study jurisprudence.

We are told that Avicenna was introduced to Aristotelian logic by a scholar when he was only fourteen. To the great surprise of his master, the scholar, Avicenna, developed a better grasp of the subject than himself. He had an insatiable thirst for knowledge. He devoured all the books in science and philosophy that were available to him. He was very much interested in medicine. It is believed that he studied medicine and reached a theoretical grasp of the subject by himself. Later, practising physicians studied medicine under his guidance and we are told that all this was realised before Avicenna reached seventeen. His approach to medicine was experimental, so that he sought to increase his medical knowledge by way of applying new techniques to patients.<sup>71</sup>

However, there was something which presented grave trouble to Avicenna during his course of omnivorous study and this was Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Accordingly, he read Aristotle's *Metaphysics* forty times and memorised it but he still could not penetrate into Aristotle's thought in *Metaphysics*. One day he happened to come across a small book on *Metaphysics* which was written by al-Farabi and it played a very important role in Avicenna's interpretation of Aristotle. What this anecdote implies is that al-Farabi had a direct influence on Avicenna in causing him to take a similar general position in philosophy.

Avicenna had also an opportunity to gain access to a remarkable library of Greek



works. This library was owned by the Sultan of Bukhara and he was able to make the fullest use of it. Before reaching eighteen, Avicenna thought that he had completed the assimilation of all the scientific and philosophical knowledge available to him. After that he ceased searching and devoted himself to practising philosophy. However, his contribution to medieval science should also be remembered. Avicenna's Canon of Medicine had an outstanding value in medicine. When we come to his philosophy, the *Shifa* and the *Najat* have major importance from the philosophical point of view. The *Shifa* is a great compendium and contains sciences as well as philosophy. The *Najat* consists of three parts which are namely logic, natural philosophy and theology. It is hard to say whether his general position in philosophy is Neoplatonic or Aristotelian. However, he could be regarded as a Neoplatonist as far as his theology and cosmology were concerned.

According to him, God is the One which exists necessarily (*wajib al-wujud*). Everything is dependent on it in the sense that everything emanates from it. Beneath God, there are pure intelligences and the spheres, but when we come to the conception of soul, it is essentially Aristotelian. Nevertheless, it is a neoplatonised conception of the human soul. He, like the other Islamic philosophers, tries to explain prophethood. Some claim that Avicenna connects prophethood with the highest form of the soul, namely the intellect. In doing so, he does agree with al-Farabi. However, some others argue that while Avicenna connects prophethood with the intellect, al-Farabi identifies it with the highest form of imagination.<sup>72</sup>

As opposed to al-Farabi, Avicenna is not concerned with Shi'ism. His main object was to show how, through a prophet, a state could be governed in accordance with divine wisdom. He did have enough power so that he was not concerned about Sunnite ulema. Therefore he did not exaggerate the importance of philosophy and, like

Mutazilites, Avicenna regarded his philosophical conception of Islam as the true one. It should also be noted that his philosophy had a mystic side and mystics identified their own interpretation of Islam with the true Islam.<sup>73</sup>

I would like to finalise the remarks on Avicenna by stating that his philosophy had a certain relation to mysticism and Avicenna remained a sincere Muslim all his life. In relation to the latter point, he was a good Muslim and had learned the Quran by heart. He also studied the shari'a. We are even told that he went to the mosque and spoke to God about his intellectual problems. He does not say anything about his views with regard to his religion, Islam. He probably did not see any conflict between Greek scientific and philosophical activity and Islam. He appears to have conceived his intellectual efforts in terms of elucidating the essential principle of Islam which is the existence of God, who is believed to be the principle of all being. In virtue of God the human being was able to become a prophet and receive revelations. There is an intrinsic relation between Avicenna's theory of prophethood and his conception of an individual's journey to God.

The European scholars in the 19th century denied any place of mysticism in his philosophy and conceived it as extraneous to his philosophical view. However, as a result of fuller acquaintance with Avicenna's writings it became clear that this is not the case. There is a direct relation between his mysticism and his philosophy. Rather, they form a single integrated unity. It is inferred from his mystical writings that mystical life was profoundly important to him. Perhaps the mystical life was the source of his intellectual energy.

In virtue of his personal attitude to religion he is regarded as closer to Plato and naturally less Aristotelian. However, I will try to show in the coming section that this claim is without any ground. However, for the moment I will briefly state that because



he was closer to Aristotle, he even succeeded in rationalising prophethood and the immortality of the human soul.<sup>74</sup>

We have already witnessed the controversies in antiquity, and it has also already been indicated that we should not expect any more unanimity among Islamic and Christian philosophers in the Middle Ages. The Islamic philosophers were greatly influenced by Alexander. However, that does not mean that they were following in his footsteps. It would especially be true to say that Avicenna and Averroes were in much more agreement with Themistius and Theophrastus than with Alexander. Nevertheless, they were in agreement with Alexander to the extent that the *nous poietikos* did not belong to the human being. However, they never identified it with God as Alexander had done. Avicenna and Averroes considered that not only the *nous poietikos* but also the *nous* that is potentially all things is eternal and immaterial. Averroes goes further away from Avicenna in attributing the whole attributes of the *nous poietikos* to the material intellect.<sup>75</sup>

It could be seen from the exposition of the views of the Islamic philosophers that Aristotle's theory of the intellect was transformed into something which was rather alien to the spirit of Aristotelian philosophy. Although Aquinas reacted grossly against the interpretation of Aristotle's theory of intellect given by the Islamic philosopher, he did not refrain from making Aristotle's theory of intellect any less Christian, any less alien to the spirit of Aristotelian philosophy. However, we will deal with his interpretation later.

Before presenting Avicenna's view on Aristotle's *De Anima* and *Metaphysics*, let us spell out in what way the Islamic philosophers transformed Aristotle. It was accepted by the Islamic commentators of Aristotle that to gain the highest knowledge -which is non-discursive - and to be united with the transcendent intellect, necessitates some

preparation which is of a discursive nature.<sup>76</sup> In other words, if the eternal truth is sought in order to be received, the human intellect must already be in some sort of perfection in terms of actuality. It appears that Aristotle advocates the idea that experience can lead us to cognition of the highest principles. Therefore, after all the Islamic philosophers in general might be right in their view, and in this sense experience could be construed as preparation for attaining non-discursive knowledge, however they might be wrong in considering experience as belonging to the domain of discursive reasoning, for experience belongs to the sphere of the senses.<sup>77</sup>

As a result it could be said that the Islamic philosophers seem to be following in the footsteps of Plato and Plotinus rather than Aristotle.<sup>78</sup> I also think that Avicenna, among the other Islamic philosophers, is the one who neoplatonised Aristotle more than anybody. By doing so, he would also be able to explain prophethood in Islam which by no means can be traced back to Aristotle. Therefore, a severe judgement is passed by Hicks, who says that "he [Aristotle] was not a Moslem mystic nor a Christian theologian".<sup>79</sup> He appears, however, to fail in recognising the Neoplatonic influence on the Islamic philosopher.

Now it is time to be concerned with Avicenna's philosophy in more detail. Here I shall mainly concentrate on the following topics in Avicenna, which are:

1. The emanation of the universe and the active intellect.
2. Levels of human intellect and the function of the active intellect in relation to human intellect.
3. Imagination, thinking and intuition.
4. Conjunction with the active intellect and immortality.
5. Prophecy.

Of the topics above, I do not think that the emanation of the universe and the role of the



active intellect in it has a great importance as far as the present study is concerned, since I here intend to examine Avicenna's theory of intellect in relation to Aristotle's theory of noetic activity in *De Anima*. Therefore, I shall deal with the first topic in brief.

Avicenna does not hold an essentially different view from al-Farabi. He envisages a translunar region which contains nine primary spheres, namely an outermost, diurnal sphere, the sphere of the fixed stars, and finally the seven spheres that consist of the planets, the sun and the moon. According to him, each sphere has its own incorporeal intelligence (*aql*) which functions as its mover. He, like al-Farabi, interrelates intelligences and spheres through a series of emanations. However, while he is doing it he also tries to answer a philosophical question which is; how, from the one, can a plural universe be derived? For the philosophic problem is expressed in the terse formula "from the one, insofar as it is one, only one can come into existence [*yujad*]".<sup>80</sup>

It is said that the problem of explaining how a complete unitary first principle can cause a plural universe was put forward first by Plotinus. It also makes a reappearance in one of the Arabic interpretations of Plotinus. However, the formula which is "from one only one comes into existence" cannot be traced back before Avicenna.<sup>81</sup> On his view of the universe, First Cause is beyond the intelligence and the celestial spheres. Although he agrees with al-Farabi that everything emanates from the First Cause necessarily (*yalzam*) he differs from him in saying that the incorporeal intelligences exist by reason of themselves.

According to him, the object of thought for the first intelligence is nothing but the First Cause, and the second intelligence necessarily emanates from it. Although it exists by virtue of the First Cause, the first intelligence also has itself as a second object of thought and finally it emanates the soul of the outermost sphere. The scheme of successive emanations is designed in a similar way. The second intelligence has the

First Cause, itself as a being necessarily existent by reason of its cause, and itself as objects of its thought. The final link in the chain of incorporeal intelligence is the active intellect which is in charge of human thinking activity is identified with the *nous poietikos* in *De Anima* III.5. Avicenna tries to explain why the process of emanation stops at the active intellect by saying that although it is true to say that necessary emanation of a multiplicity of things from an incorporeal intelligence produces a plurality of aspects in the successive intelligence, nevertheless the process is not convertible. Additionally, all intelligences which contain the same kind of aspects do not produce the same type of effects. There is therefore an intrinsic relation between when an intelligence emanates and what an intelligence is. Throughout emanation intelligences become less powerful and pure. In other words, their power diminishes. Since the active intellect represents the final link in the series, it is not powerful enough and pure enough to emanate eternal beings like others.<sup>82</sup>

However, the active intellect has a set of functions to fulfil, which are:

1. The active intellect cannot imitate the intelligences above, it cannot emanate anything eternally, but the active intellect is the emanating cause of the matter in the sublunar world.
2. The active intellect is the emanating cause of natural forms such as the forming of plants, animals and human beings.
3. It acts as the principle of the actualisation of the human intellect.

He goes further and says that even some works in the sublunar world cannot solely be attributed to the active intellect. He prefers to talk, in some instances, of the participation of auxiliary factors.

Avicenna, as opposed to al-Farabi, rejects the argument that the celestial spheres cannot merely be the existence of the underlying matter of the sublunar world. If



material substratum underlies the four elements and everything in the world of change the circular motion of the celestial spheres could only be regarded as an auxiliary factor in relation to a single common material substratum and the four elements. For the uniform motion of the spheres cannot explain multiplicity and diversity in the sublunar region. Each sphere is different from the next. They do not share common attributes. If that is the case, how could the sphere be regarded as the cause of the completely uniform prime matter of the sublunar world? According to him we should look at something different, and he comes to say that merely the incorporeal intelligences could be candidates for producing the wholly uniform prime matter of the sublunar world, the active intellect. It contains the forms of the lunar world, that is, the forms in the sublunar world, but we should make it clear that the active intellect, with the participation of the movements of the heavens and from the last of the intelligences is emanated (*yafid*). So prime matter which contains the forms of all natural things in the sublunar world is emanated by the active intellect. However, this is not done without the participation of the heavens, but the contribution of the heavens through their circular motion is not explained.

According to Davidson, what we see here is this: in Aristotle, the classic proof of existence of a First Cause is from motion in the universe. Avicenna, however, presents us with proof from the existence of the universe. Aristotle inferred the existence of the celestial intelligences from the motion of celestial spheres whereas Avicenna came to infer their existence from the existence of the spheres. In this context, many Aristotelian commentators have come to regard the active intellect as something which enables the human intellect to pass from potentiality to actuality. In Avicenna, however, the matter is understood quite differently. He inferred the existence of the active intellect from the existence of sublunar prime matter. He went

further and inferred the existence of an active intellect from the existence of natural forms in the sublunar region and more truly from the existence of the human soul.

In sum, the active intellect possesses all natural forms in a unified mode. The active intellect emanates the forms eternally. It emanates them out of necessity, for to act in the way the active intellect does is also the necessary expression of its being.<sup>83</sup> The active intellect is described as the giver of forms however, the active intellect is an immaterial, unifying being. Being as such, it could only produce a unitary effect in a unitary subject, and if the active intellect acts upon undifferentiated matter it will only produce undifferentiated effect. What this would mean is that matter would not potentially contain a plurality of forms. In Avicenna, an individualising principle (*mukhassis*) is related to the celestial spheres which impose four qualities, namely heat, cold, dryness and wetness, on matter. He also speaks of the same sphere which also helps matter for the reception of forms.

The active intellect, as it has been said already, emanates the forms of the four elements, which are earth, water, air and fire. He dismisses completely a mechanical understanding of the universe. He thinks that matter cannot exist without the form of an element.

There is an intrinsic relation between the matter of something and the form. In a sense, the finer the blend the more perfect the form. The four elements cannot receive life in virtue of containing contrary qualities in them. Avicenna accepts that matter has the potentiality of receiving all physical forms. Matter, in a way, possesses the imprint of the forms of the sublunar world in virtue of being acted on by the active intellect. A manifestation of new form in matter is no more than an exhibition of the form in matter, for matter has merely exhibited what it had potentially. The manifestation of form in matter is realised by way of preparation which includes removal of obstacles. When



obstacles are removed and matter is prepared to receive higher forms, the contrary qualities begin to disappear in a given portion of matter. At the final stage of this process the mixture comes to resemble the celestial bodies which have no contrary qualities.

At the possible upper limit of homogeneity, matter could reach the point where no further destruction of contrary is possible, and when matter is blended to the perfect degree it becomes capable of receiving a human soul which is immaterial substance. A human soul in a sense represents the relation between the body of a celestial sphere, the soul of the sphere and the corresponding immaterial intelligence.

Avicenna firmly argues that the active intellect is the cause of the existence of the human soul. He maintains that the human body cannot produce its own soul insofar as it is a body. The reason for it is that a body does not act except through its powers. However, the powers within the human body are also not enough to produce the human soul, for they are material as opposed to the human soul. He goes further and states that anything corporeal cannot produce anything incorporeal. In other words, the corporeal cannot be the cause of the incorporeal. For what is above cannot be produced by what is under.

Some final remarks on the subject: he claims that the celestial spheres are not the cause of the existence of other souls. For the soul of the spheres acts only through their bodies. If that is the case, a body cannot be intermediary amongst souls. When we come to the First Cause of the universe, it cannot be the cause of the existence of human souls and intellect, for it is a simple being and creates only a single effect. However, there are many human souls and intellects. The incorporeal intelligences are also dismissed on the same base. Although the intelligences produce a multiplicity of effects, they are far from producing multiplicity within a single species. The cause of

multiplicity in a single species could only be produced by an agent which acts upon divisible matter, and this is the active intellect which produces a multiplicity of things within a single species.<sup>84</sup>

#### **14. The Active Intellect and Human Thinking in Avicenna**

It would be wrong to perceive the role of the active intellect in relation to human thinking in terms of participation. What I mean is that the active intellect does not reside in the human soul, it acts on the human intellect as being a transcendent agent. If that is the case, we should investigate how the active intellect produces sublunar matter, sublunar forms, intelligible thoughts. However, Avicenna does not explicitly deal with it and he also does not explain how they are emanated, whether the active intellect produces them through a single emanation or through separate emanation. Therefore I would like to concentrate on his theory of the active intellect as the cause of human noetic activity in essence.

Avicenna states that the human soul is immaterial. His argument runs as follows: a portion of proper matter receives a human soul from the ever-present emanation of the active intellect. As opposed to the other natural forms, the human soul has no relation to anything material. In other words, the human soul does not exist in a body in any way - as a power or as a form of the body - nor has anything to do with it. His reason is that intelligible thoughts are indivisible and can only reside in an indivisible subject. If the human soul is to receive intelligible thought then it must be an immaterial substance but, he does not deny that as long as the soul operates through the body, the soul is not conscious of composite propositions originating from perception. But the question is, how can the soul as an indivisible immaterial substance relate itself to perception? Further, if the soul is an immaterial substance and does not reside in a



human body, how could it ever be said to be in a state of potentiality?

Some have detected a Cartesian flavour in Avicenna's argument. He offers an example to explain his view: imagine a man who imagines himself floating in the air but no part of his body touches any other part and he does not have any sensory experience. According to him, the man will still be aware of his existence.

He accepts that the immaterial human soul has just capacity to think at birth. It does not contain any thought whatsoever. The potentiality to think develops as the child grows. He differentiates three stages of human intellect:

- a) 'Material' intellect which is merely an empty potentiality for thinking and belongs to all individuals. It inheres within the human being from birth. It is a disposition (*istidad*).
- b) 'Intellect in habitu' (*bil-malaka*) provides the first intelligible thoughts. For example, "the whole is greater than the part" and "things equal to the same thing are equal to each other".
- c) The final stage of potential theoretical intellect is called 'actual intellect'. In a sense, it represents the perfect potential stage of theoretical intellect. It is the complete (*kamaliyya*) potentiality. Nevertheless, at this stage an individual human is still not able to attend to thinking actually.

He also speaks of the acquired intellect (*mustafad*). It is entirely different from the other levels of the human theoretical intellect. At this level, 'intelligible forms' are actually open to the man and he attends to them. Although al-Farabi considered having the acquired intellect as the highest level of the human soul, he did not regard it as being acquired externally. It rather signifies the level which is reached by human effort. In Avicenna, the term acquired intellect points to a completely different fact. He calls it acquired intellect for, by virtue of it, potential intellect passes to actuality. It is acquired

through contact with the active intellect. What this also indicates is that forms are gained externally, namely they are not in the soul.

It should be noted that the active intellect is the cause of the four levels of human intellect. It emanates a human soul which is received by a portion of proper matter. With being the cause of the existence of the human material intellect, the active intellect leads man from one stage to the next. It also provides the individual human being with the first principles of thought and concepts.

It is interesting also to point out that Avicenna rejects the principles of practical intellect in the active intellect. He considers the principle of practical intellect as commonly accepted views, traditions, opinions and flimsy experiences. Al-Farabi had also regarded the principles of practical intellect as coming from experience. He had also refuted the view that they have anything to do with the active intellect.

Avicenna also claims that experience does not give us necessary propositions. In other words, universal propositions which are of certainty do not come from experience. For example, "one could say that all animals move their lower jaw when they are eating", but it is a fact that "the crocodile moves its upper jaw when it chews". Avicenna here observes the limitations of empirical knowledge. As opposed to the example above, the first principles of thought, for example the proposition "the whole is greater than the part" is universally true. He thus comes to conclude that certainty cannot come from judgements based on experience. Universal propositions emanate from a divine source, namely from the active intellect. Therefore, to know them is to enter into conjunction (*ittisal*) with the immaterial principle that is the active intellect. Knowing, in his view, is the process of replacing the soul's original defective disposition with a perfect (*tamm*) disposition. To attend to knowledge is to enter into conjunction with the active intellect.



Now let us consider Avicenna's understanding of the conjunction. He firmly rejects the view that conjunction is union. The reason he gives for his refutation goes as follows: if we say that "the human soul becomes united with the active intellect" we must also accept that when it knows a single thought it would be able to possess everything that the active intellect contains. In other words, it would know everything that the active intellect knows. This would also necessitate that the human soul knows all intelligible thoughts and be ignorant of nothing which is impossible. Another reason for the impossibility of union with the active intellect for the human soul is that the soul cannot unite with a part of the active intellect, for immaterial beings are indivisible so they do not have parts. Therefore, the only way left is conjunction which does rule out any union but effect (*athar*). The active intellect is then the direct source of human thought. When the human soul enters into conjunction with the active intellect, it becomes identical with it. Thoughts it receives or which emanate from the active intellect are absolute, simple and undifferentiated. They are namely concepts which are of non-discursive nature. Therefore, thoughts given by the active intellect and received by the human soul are of divine nature. They resemble the thoughts of the celestial bodies.<sup>85</sup>

## 15. Discursive and Non-Discursive Noetic Activity

As was stated previously, the Islamic interpreters of Aristotle regarded the active intellect as a transcendent substance. However, they did not agree in their understanding of how the active intellect produces actual thought in the potential human intellect.

In *De Anima*, Aristotle says that we never think without images. The images, he also states, are in the imaginative faculty.<sup>86</sup> Aristotle also maintains that intellect is

related to what is intelligible as perception is to what is perceptible. The intellect is identified with what it thinks. However, unlike perception, thinking is not an affection.<sup>87</sup> In sum, the human intellect does not think without images and images are within the imaginative faculty. Whenever the intellect thinks, then, it becomes identical with what it thinks. But when we come to try to understand the role given to the active intellect, we find that Aristotle himself does not say much about it. He offers us two undeveloped analogies, the first of which compares the active intellect to the 'art' which acts on matter. He gives us another example a few lines later, in which the active intellect is compared to light. The active intellect makes actual what is potential, like light makes potential colours actual. The analogy suggests that the active intellect leads the human intellect to actuality by way of illuminating what is intelligible in the world. If we would like to be more precise, it leads the human intellect by way of illuminating what is intelligible in images contained in the imaginative faculty. The intelligible images are then presented to the human intellect. The potential intellect becomes actual and identical with them. This way of understanding the analogies brings us closer to Plato, but there is no textual support for understanding the analogies in this way. He writes a few sentences on the matter and gives us two analogies and then turns his attention to other things.

In general, we could say that al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes offer us two sorts of explanation by which they try to explain how the active intellect produces actual human thought. The core of the explanation goes like this: the active intellect illuminates images in the imaginative faculty and leads the potential intellect to actuality by way of doing this. The other explanation is that the active intellect functions as a cosmic transmitter. It eternally emanates all intelligible thoughts. Its transmissions are then received by the human intellects which are capable of it. In other words, the



human intellects receive intelligible thoughts directly from the active intellect.<sup>88</sup>

Avicenna speaks of a retention and compositive imaginative faculty (*khayal* and *ashya mutakhayyala*). The retentive imaginative faculty receives and retains images from the *sensus communis* whereas the compositive imaginative faculty combines images in the retentive imagination with one another and separates them at its own disposal.

We have already seen that Avicenna claims that the human intellect receives intelligible thoughts directly from the active intellect when it is properly prepared by the compositive imaginative faculty and it obtains thought when it looks on particulars in the retentive imagination (*khayal*). Whatever the relation between the human intellect, the retentive and compositive imaginative faculty may be, he appears to be claiming that the human intellect takes forms from images that are provided either by retentive or compositive imaginative faculties that present images to the human intellect. In other words, the human intellect receives thoughts from the active intellect and the active intellect works on it through the retentive and imaginative faculty.

Another important faculty in Avicenna is the thinking faculty which is called in Arabic *mutafakkira* or *fikra*. It, like the two kinds of imaginative faculty, is internal to all individuals. As far as the function of the imaginative faculty is concerned, it is almost identical with it. The faculty of *mutafakkira* works on images in the retentive imagination by way of combining and discombining in order to form new configurations. It is in the brain and is subject to change. More precisely, it is not an intellectual faculty but a physical one. It does not survive after death.

Avicenna distinguishes two phases of human thought. In the first phase the active intellect produces an intellect in which thought is not differentiated. In the second phase thought becomes differentiated. With the second phase the act of the active

intellect starts and ends within the human soul. The thinking faculty (*mafakkira, fikra*) retains the further emanations of differentiated forms from the absolute or abstract intellect which had emanated in the first place. The thinking faculty puts differentiated forms into forms (*alfaz*) and arranges the forms in sequences. Since differentiated knowledge is produced through the thinking faculty, Avicenna distinguishes it from the undifferentiated knowledge or simple knowledge which emanates in the first of the two phases. Avicenna also says that simple knowledge belongs to intellect whereas differentiated knowledge is contained in the soul.<sup>89</sup>

The aim of thinking (discursive thinking) is to enable the individual to have a perfect disposition for conjunction with the active intellect. Discursive thinking seeks to establish a relation, a perfect relation with the active intellect. The discursive faculty prepares the soul for conjoining with the active intellect in a sense in two phases. In the first phase, it combines and separates images preserved in the retentive imagination and passes on the human intellect. In the second phase it produces thoughts which are undifferentiated and ordered in logical sequence. In doing so, the discursive faculty induces the emanation of the active intellect within the human soul. After this, the soul is ready to conjoin with the active intellect at its will. Furthermore, the soul does not need the discursive faculty any more. It does not have to go back to images and resort to the use of the discursive faculty in order to conjoin with the active intellect.

Now it is perhaps time to question the place of discursive thinking in Avicenna's philosophy. The discursive faculty or discursive thinking brings the human soul from the level of merely having material intellect to the highest possible stage. In a way the discursive faculty follows the human soul through the stage of intellect in habitu, the stage of actual intellect, and finally is at work at the stage of the acquired intellect. Avicenna generally associates discursive thinking with conclusions of syllogism. The



soul comes to recognise the conclusion of a syllogism when its discursive faculty retains the *middle term* through the emanation of the active intellect and combines the elements of syllogism. For example, a person begins with the concept of man and mortal. These two concepts, however, were provided by the emanation of the active intellect through the discursive faculty. During the formation of a syllogism the discursive faculty presents an image to the soul. By doing so, it prepares the soul to receive the emanation of the active intellect. It differentiates the concept animal from the emanation of the active intellect, which could function as a middle term. And the discursive faculty, indeed the same faculty, then forms the major premise of a syllogism; all men are animals.

Avicenna also tries to explain why we make mistakes or, more precisely, why the discursive faculty appears to make mistakes. For if the discursive faculty does so more than preparing the soul for conjoining with the active intellect, how does error occur? He already thinks that conjunction with the active intellect produces the terms and concepts (including the middle term). Therefore, error cannot come from the above, i.e. from the active intellect or through conjunction with it. However, it is the result of combining and separating by the discursive faculty. It is said therefore that it does sometimes well and sometimes badly. It should also be remembered that the discursive faculty is a physical faculty of the soul. It makes mistakes sometimes. The active intellect cannot be held responsible for the mistakes the discursive faculty sometimes makes.<sup>90</sup> Although the discursive faculty has an important role to play in establishing conjunction with the active intellect, it is no longer needed once the human intellect has conjoined with the active intellect. In sum, it could be said that it loses its centrality in human thought at a point of conjunction. Thus the discursive faculty is to be dispensed with at the end. It even need not be used to re-establish conjunction with

the active intellect to rethink the thought.

I would now like to enter into the discussion of non-discursive thought, or intuition, in Avicenna.

The term *agkhinoia* in *Posterior Analytics* is translated into Arabic meaning that "wit (*dhaka*) indicates a fine attribute of intuition (*husn hads*) to find out middle terms in no time". Avicenna shares the same view and considers quick wit as the strength of intuition (*hads*).<sup>91</sup>

As opposed to the discursive faculty, the person who has intuitive power reaches "the middle term" and the conclusion of the syllogism instantaneously. There is no need to resort to images to produce the middle term of a syllogism. It is a divine power within the human being. In other words, intuition is a divine emanation and intellectual conjunction which does not require any discursive activity (*kasb*).<sup>92</sup>

Although the discursive faculty could sometimes err, intuition does not make any mistakes, for it receives the conclusions together with the middle term from the active intellect. A person with the power of intuition conjoins with the active intellect without any discursive activity of the intellect. It is a direct relationship with the active intellect. However, a person who lacks it could also enter into conjunction with active intellect through the discursive faculty. I would finally like to say that intuition in the perfect sense signifies the highest level of prophecy in Avicenna.

## **16. Conjunction versus Union: the Active Intellect and Immortality**

It should be remembered that among the stages of the human intellect, acquired intellect signifies the highest level of intellectual development, for it brings the human intellect into conjunction with the active intellect. It is the crowning state of the human intellect. However, in Avicenna conjunction is perceived rather differently from al-



Farabi. He considers conjunction and having the acquired intellect as quotidian events. They do not indicate or signify absolute intellectual perfection. Al-Farabi claims that the acquired intellect leads the human intellect to conjunction with the active intellect, whereas Avicenna thinks that through conjunction the human soul gains the acquired intellect. In sum, the conjunction of the human intellect with the active intellect does not in any way indicate union with the active intellect. It is the non-discursive faculty that signifies the perfection. Before that, the human being depends on the external and internal senses. However, after having a thought the human soul no longer resorts to images. It immerses itself in its own activity. The soul in a sense discards the faculty of perception, imagination. Just as when a person reaches the summit of a mountain he/she discards equipment that is used to get there. If he/she keeps this equipment it will get in the way. Similarly, when the human soul reaches its perfection or its ultimate aim, the physical faculties which helped it to get there are no longer needed and should be dispensed with. Furthermore the human soul does not need the entire body.

Avicenna thinks that the human intellect can apprehend only one thought at a time. However, it is not clear whether this applies to the intellect which has reached its intellectual perfection. He definitely speaks of a state of the human soul in which it is released from the body and enters into conjunction with the active intellect permanently.

It also becomes identical with the immaterial beings which contain the entire corpus of the intelligible order of all existence. It suggests that the soul is also able to think the entire corpus of thought which is undifferentiated. Avicenna cancels such a conjunction with the active intellect and immaterial beings until the death of the body, but it is not clear whether the human intellect can achieve permanent conjunction and be able to think the entire corpus of thought in an undifferentiated mode during the life of the body. It appears that it could only be achieved through intuition. Whether Avicenna

envisages here the mystical or ecstatic experience is rather controversial.<sup>93</sup>

Corbin finds a full expression of mystical doctrine in the work of Avicenna, namely Isharat. But Davidson claims that the term *arif* might appear to imply mystical overtones in such contexts. Nevertheless, the fact is that it means *knower, man of knowledge*. So the cognate abstract noun, *irfan*, basically means knowledge, therefore the Isharat describes the person of knowledge who attains a course of training and devotes him/herself completely to the "absolute truth". Such a person turns away from the world of falsehood and experiences intense feelings frequently by which the "light of the truth" shines on him/her. He/she could eventually realise conjunction.<sup>94</sup> It appears to me that Davidson cannot be justified in his claim that conjunction does not imply genuine mystical or ecstatic experience, for the language that Avicenna uses just indicates otherwise.

In general, philosophers in the Aristotelian tradition and Aristotelian commentators limit human immortality to the intellect in the human being. Al-Farabi tried to establish a direct relation between immortality and the acquired intellect. However, Avicenna follows a different path from him. According to him, the immortality of the human being has nothing to do with the perfection or the intellectual development of the human intellect. He says that the human soul is immortal because it is an immaterial substance. In other words, every individual human soul is immortal perforce.

Another of Avicenna's formulations in favour of the immortality of the human soul is the suggestion that it does not contain the potentiality of being destroyed, since it is an immaterial substance. Therefore, it does not perish with the decay of the human body. The human soul is thus intrinsically immortal.

Avicenna conceives intelligible thoughts as concepts. He argues that concepts are indivisible and they could only reside in an indivisible and immaterial subject. If the



human soul is to have concepts, the soul must be immaterial.

Avicenna justifies the independence of the human soul from the body in stating that:

1. The body cannot and is not the cause of the existence of the soul. The human body does not bring the human soul into existence. The body is nothing and affects nothing so long as it is a body. It just helps the soul accidentally. Therefore the human soul as being immaterial and self-sufficient substance cannot be, in a sense, produced by the body. Avicenna also rejects the consideration that the body is the material cause of the soul. He does not see that the soul is imprinted in the body. The body is also declared not to be the formal cause or the final cause of the immaterial soul.
2. The body and the soul are substances but they are not interdependent on each other for their existence.
3. Since they do not depend on each other to exist, the existence of the soul does not require the existence of the body. It is clear from the fact that the body decays in virtue of its nature but not as a result of the soul. Therefore the human soul does not perforce die with the decay of the body.

If that is the case, one is rightly entitled to ask, is there any role left to be played by the body? The answer is the affirmative. However, it is not significant at all. The body determines the time when a soul is emanated from the active intellect. The way in which a portion of matter blended acts as an accidental cause of the soul.

Avicenna has another thesis with regard to the immortality of the human soul which is: the body cannot be the cause of the destruction of the soul because an object which is subject to destruction contains two features which oppose each other. Things which now exist but also are subject to destruction are composite beings. On the

contrary, immaterial beings are incomposite and they do not contain any multiplicity so that they are immune to destruction. For the human soul is of the same nature as the immaterial beings, it is not subject to destruction too.

Avicenna also goes back to the discussion Aristotle offers in *De Caelo*. According to Aristotle, the things that are generated are also subject to destruction.<sup>95</sup> Avicenna also appeals to what Aristotle says in *De Anima* 2.1. Aristotle says that any part of the soul whose actuality (*entelecheia*) constitutes also the actuality of a part of the body cannot be separated from the body. However, he also says that a part of the soul whose actuality is not the actuality of a part of the body survives death. Avicenna construes Aristotle's thought in a way which allows him to make the human soul entirely immortal. According to Avicenna, Aristotle cannot speak of a part of the soul being immortal because he conceives the soul as one. Immortality cannot also be gained through the development of the human intellectual faculty because whatever is not self-subsistent at the beginning cannot become so through the acquisition of an attribute. Avicenna also argues that Aristotle cannot be referring to the active intellect, since it does not form part of the human soul. Furthermore, Aristotle speaks of the human soul as a unity, therefore he comes to conclude that the human soul is immaterial and separate from the body.

However, it should be noted that Avicenna does not completely dismiss any relation between the immortality of the human soul and its intellectual perfection. Not only does it determine levels of immortality, the intellectual development also bears a great importance as far as the happiness of an individual is concerned.<sup>96</sup>

Firstly, I would like to say that in Avicenna's view every individual human being is not to have supreme eudaimonia (*saada*). In order to enjoy the highest eudaimonia an individual must achieve a perfect disposition for intellectual thought.



The soul of such an individual does not have any use for the sense faculties. It also preserves its disposition after the death of the body. It enters into conjunction with the active intellect and experiences eternal eudaimonia. It is now united with the immaterial beings and becomes identical with them. As they are, the human soul also attains the corpus of the intelligible thought. There is, I believe, no need to say that the corpus of thoughts are non-discursive ones.

Eudaimonia which is below the supreme one is available to those who succeed in achieving some sort of intellectual development in the present life. However, it is not perfect enough for conjunction with the active intellect and the immaterial beings. A person of this level must gain a considerable segment of physical and metaphysical science to enjoy a degree of eudaimonia.

Below this level a person can hope for no eudaimonia whatsoever. The human souls that could not acquire nor have the minimum degree of knowledge for minimal eudaimonia, appreciate the importance of the intellectual perfection. The appreciation of the intellectual activity, however, brings them just misery and pain after the death of their bodies. They have been controlled by two divergent factors: on the one hand they know that they are able to participate in intellectual activity and it is only the soul that could allow them to obtain perfection. In other words, they are aware of the soul's natural desire for intellectual perfection. However, they are equally controlled by the need of their bodies, which cause them to forget or to ignore their own essence. At the end of their lives, they realise that it is too late to follow the *telos* of the soul. The principles of science can only be acquired during our lifetime through the help of the physical faculties but, now the body is perished, there is nothing left to do to reverse the whole thing. They are destined to experience inevitable intense pain.

At the bottom of the scale, Avicenna speaks of the souls which are *simple* and

have no appreciation of intellectual pleasure. They do not have dispositions to conjoin with the active intellect, nor have they any desire for it. In virtue of not having any inkling of intellectual desire, this sort of human souls are also immune to the pain experienced by the souls above them.

The life they could have after death is void of intellectual pleasure and the pain of realising that intellectual pleasure and perfection are beyond them. According to him, they are like formless material substratum and share a kind of peace for all eternity. In fact, such a life is almost equal to non-existence.<sup>97</sup>

However, the pain experienced by a soul subservient to the body and its needs fades away gradually but the pain of unfulfilled intellectual desire endures forever. The reason he gives is that intellectual desire explains the essence of the human rational soul. Therefore it exists as long as the soul continues to exist. As opposed to this, the pain of the subservient soul fades away. For the pain enslaved soul experience is due to the body. In sum, Avicenna does not relate immortality directly to intellect but the perfection of intellect plays a significant role in relation to eudaimonia.

## **17. Intuition, Prophecy and Intellect**

It would not be wrong to say that the source of divergent views on Aristotle's theory of intellect among the Aristotelian commentators has been mainly to establish the relation between the *nous poietikos* and the human intellect. As we have particularly witnessed in Avicenna, the relation between the two intellects has almost lost any connection with Aristotle's views on the subject. It appears to be more plausible to talk of a Neoplatonised Aristotle rather than anything else. Furthermore, Avicenna introduces some other elements into his interpretation of Aristotle which bear no relation to Aristotelian philosophy. The most important and the most interesting of these is



prophecy, which is considered by Avicenna very subtly; therefore, it seems that he ultimately intended to explain what is said in the Quran rather than wishing to Neoplatonise Aristotle, and he conceded that it could only be done by resorting to Neoplatonic thoughts. However, the conception of Aristotelian God remained essential in almost all Islamic philosophers.

I do not intend here to provide Avicenna's view on prophecy in full, for it is beyond the scope of this project.

Avicenna, as opposed to al-Farabi, relates prophecy directly to the active intellect. It will be remembered that al-Farabi found a place for prophecy in intellect. He distinguishes two types of people, which also determines two levels of prophecy. At the lower level of prophecy the emanation of the active intellect passes through the rational faculty and enters the imaginative faculty of the human soul whose intellect is not perfected. The human soul can receive the knowledge of individual events which are of future and beyond the power of senses. It can also depict theoretical truth figuratively. However, at the higher level of prophecy, which is also called revelation, the emanation from the active intellect is received by a human intellect which is perfect and ready to enter into conjunction with the active intellect. However, it should be made clear that in both cases of prophecy the emanation of the active intellect is reflected in the imaginative faculty. The human intellect does not actually play an important role, therefore prophecy is not conceived to produce genuine theoretical knowledge. Avicenna also tries to explain prophecy mainly in terms of al-Farabi but he recognises that prophecy produces theoretical knowledge. According to Avicenna, the human soul obtains intelligible thoughts from the active intellect so that the human intellect just does not have to follow discursive procedures. He thinks that intellectual and imaginative prophecy are all internal. They could be attended by any soul which is

properly prepared.

Avicenna connects intellectual prophecy to intuition. The discursive faculty has the function of presenting images to the human intellect. By doing so, it prepares the soul and intellect for conjunction with the active intellect. Once conjunction is established with the active intellect, the discursive faculty starts to work by differentiating intelligible thoughts out of the emanation. However, for some souls this is not a compulsory route to follow in order to reach knowledge. They do not have to revert to the discursive procedure. Avicenna says that intuition can vary with respect to quantity and quality. The quantity is of the numbers of the middle terms of syllogisms. Of the quality, it can be discovered in relation to quickness. The people with the lower intellectual power possess no intuition at all, but a person who is at the highest level of intellectual perfection possesses intuition with regard to all subjects of inquiry and can exercise their ability in the briefest time. In other words, Avicenna considers that the people who are at the upper level of intellectual perfection have also intuition in the superlative sense. Such people receive only a report of the truth. He also speaks of prophecy which is peculiar to the compositive imaginative faculty. It is inferior to intellectual prophecy, for it happens to a person whose intellect is not necessarily meant to be at its perfection. In addition, depiction of theoretical thoughts is figurative but not scientific in character. Avicenna also speaks of another type of prophecy which enables him to rationalise miracles. He relates it to the desire of the soul. A noble, powerful soul can affect other bodies by complete strength of will. Such a soul can heal the sick, turn fire into earth, cause rain to fall and so on. It is a non-intellectual prophecy and creates changes in the physical world through acts of 'sheer will'.



## 18. From Reason to Experience: A Transition and Transformation

Islamic philosophers did not see any conflict between their religion and philosophy, therefore they believed that they could establish the principles of Islam philosophically or remove some mistakes from the sayings of philosophy - so much so that al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Avicenna, Averroes and al-Ghazali endorsed different philosophical theories and approaches throughout their intellectual lives. Although, by the time of al-Ghazali, we witness a real break between philosophy and religion, he is nevertheless seen by Averroes as being an Asharite with the Asharities, a Suf with the Sufis and a philosopher with the philosophers.<sup>98</sup> Islamic philosophers in general followed Aristotle enthusiastically. I believe the reason for this is the monotheist conception of God in Aristotle, for *nous poietikos* is generally perceived as a transcendent being, but it is never identified with God. It essentially remains, if one can say it, as a vicar of God on earth. However, they were very much influenced by Neoplatonist philosophy because the Quranic conception of God, regardless of its strict monotheist conception of God, is the one which is in full charge of everything on earth. From that point of view, the combination of Aristotle's thoughts with Neoplatonist philosophy was very much needed, and they just did it.

My interest in following the interpretation of Aristotle's theory of the intellect lies in rediscovering Aristotle. Seeing the different and divergent understanding of the theory of the intellect at different times and by different minds, I am hoping to make my contribution to this long struggle, but for now let us proceed with the views of the Islamic philosophers who mainly endorsed Avicenna's philosophy.

Avicenna wrote in Arabic as well as in Persian, and his works were available to Moslem readers.<sup>99</sup> One of his infamous followers was Ghazali. He criticised him severely yet at the same time followed some of Ibn-sina's thoughts so closely but at the

end decided that philosophy should be killed.<sup>100</sup>

The first encounter in search of truth was with the rational theologians (*muta-kallimun*). According to al-Ghazali they operate on the basis of certain presuppositions which are not discussed but taken for granted. However, al-Ghazali thinks that they are those that require a rational justification, but theologians are unable to provide this justification. Thus he turned to philosophy to get rid of his intellectual worries.

He encountered Isma'ilities who receive their instruction in an authoritative form, imam. The main point with which Ghazali did not agree was that according to Isma'ilities, if one wants to reach internal truth or infallible knowledge on any point, one must turn to the infallible source of it, namely to the infallible imam.

His final encounter was with sufism. Ghazali finally came to realise that philosophy cannot provide an answer to the problem of knowledge. There is a limit to the knowledge that could be gained by rational methods. Watt tells us that in *Munqidh*, Ghazali speaks of his dissatisfaction by saying that "I realised ... that I had already advanced as far as was possible by way of knowledge. What remained for me was not to be attained by instruction and study but only by immediate experience and by living as a sufi".<sup>101</sup>

While he was in Baghdad, Ghazali became very much dissatisfied with his life. It occurred to him that his activity was controlled by personal ambition instead of the desire to serve God. He had profound internal perplexities and struggles which in turn led him to some sort of serious psychological illness. He almost could not speak because his tongue dried up. He also became unable to teach and feed himself. The doctors could not do anything and at the end he decided to give up academic work entirely and join the life of a sufi.

He died in Tus on 18th December 1110. According to his brother Ahmad, on



the day of his death he first had his ablutions and performed the dawn prayer. Then he asked for his shroud, kissed it, put it on his eyes and said, "Obediently, I enter into the presence of the King". He then turned and faced Mecca. Then he stretched out his feet and was dead before sunrise.<sup>102</sup>

## 19. Greek Philosophy, Islam and Ghazali

It is known from *al-Munqidh min ad-dalal* (*The Deliverer from Error*) that Ghazali's intellectual journey was long, painful and difficult. His quest for truth never ceased and his personal difficulties did not end until he gave up his academic work and joined the life of a Sufi. At the beginning, however, he decided to study 'the sciences' of philosophy to find truth. It is also true, however, that at his time theology was in a weak position as opposed to philosophy. It could not stand philosophical criticism, for the religious scholars tried to reply to philosophical questions with inadequate answers and became ridiculed by the philosophers.

Al-Ghazali began as a sceptic. He was ready to be led by truth. He also wanted to see how far the Greek sciences were in line with the principles of Islam. Like most of the Islamic philosophers, he saw no conflict between Islam and logic, mathematics and physics, but al-Ghazali also noticed that the clarity and certainty of mathematical arguments used by the philosophers were misleading people. It led people to think that all the arguments of the philosophers were of the same clarity and certainty and thus followed their views, their metaphysical thoughts, without any question.

After writing *Maqasid al-falasifa* (*The Aims of the Philosophers*), he wrote another book, called *Tahafut al-Falasifa* (*The Inconsistency of the Philosophers*). Ghazali mainly criticised philosophers and tried to show how their metaphysical views were wrong and weak from the logical point of view. He subtly argued against the

views of philosophers and came to conclude that they were wrong, at least on twenty points. In other words, they were mistaken on many things and their views contained many contradictions. Of the twenty points, Ghazali considered three as the most serious:

1. Bodies cannot be resurrected but only souls.
2. God knows what is universal but not particulars.
3. The world is eternal, thus it is not created.

The positive influence of Ghazali's work was that the disciplines associated with philosophy are neutral with regard to Islam. Thus he persuaded some of the theologians to be involved with them, e.g. Aristotelian logic and metaphysical conceptions, except the twenty points. He himself adored the logical works of Aristotle. As a result of his effort, later rational theologians in Islam tended to base their views on a philosophical basis.

When we come to the negative results of Ghazali's study, it is hard to be objective. However, it is generally considered that his attack on the philosophers was devastating, so that as a result philosophy was killed off.<sup>103</sup>

However, it seems to me absurd to blame Ghazali for the death of philosophy in the Islamic world. It may be true that there were no great philosophers in the east after 1100 who could be placed within the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic traditions, but it should also be remembered that the last great philosopher, Ibn-sina, had died in 1037. This shows that Avicenna had died twenty years before al-Ghazali was born. It is possible that the decline of philosophy may have started long before Ghazali. However, Averroes was writing a critique of the Tahafut in the western Islamic world, but what cannot be denied is that philosophy almost perished with his death in 1111.

We will see in what follows that the end of a particular philosophical tradition



did not mean the end of philosophising. People continued to profess al-Farabi and Avicenna. It would be more correct to say that doing philosophy was transformed along two fresh lines: on the one hand, through the incorporation of philosophical conceptions and methods into rational theology, certain disciplines of philosophy became a kind of prolegomena to theology. This was particularly true of Sunnite theologians. On the other hand, some were interested in the fusion of philosophy with Shi'ite ideas or with non-Islamic mystical thoughts. After Ghazali Shihab-ad-din as-Subrawardi developed the philosophy or theosophy of the Ishraq (illuminative window) (1191). It has been greatly influential in general but particularly in Iran. Therefore it is, I believe, wrong to think that philosophy was killed off by al-Ghazali's critique of philosophy; on the contrary, it appears that the study of philosophy was transformed by it in the Islamic world.

The conception of Sufism in previous centuries had not been positive. It had been identified with heretical beliefs and with a neglect of the common practice of Islam. Therefore, it had not found a great favour among many jurists and theologians. Ghazali, being Sufi himself, intended in his greatest work in the *Ihya (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)* to prove how a strict Muslim could lead a genuine Sufi life, and his *Bidayat al-hidaya* explains the rules of such a life which he himself practised after being exhausted by academic life in Baghdad. It was also followed in the Monastery College which was established by him in Tus.<sup>104</sup>

## **20. Experience: An Alternative to Discursive Thinking**

We could say that philosophy as a discursive form of thinking has lost its attraction in the Islamic world by the time of Ghazali. Islamic theologians and thinkers began to question the value of philosophy and sought to discover the meaning of life,

truth and happiness in some other way.

Before discussing the thoughts of Islamic thinkers after Avicenna, I believe that it would be useful to say something of the term Sufism. It could mean either a regimen of God-fearing asceticism or it could signify mystical experience.<sup>105</sup>

Ghazali's work, entitled *Mishkat al-Anwar* (*The Niche of Lights*) presents us with two types of people who desire to ascend to the 'true heavens' and gain a genuine understanding of God. People who try to know through the means of scientific inquiry (*irfan, ilm*) form the one type of people, whereas those who are already in a state of direct experience of God or 'true heavens' (*hal dhawqi; dwhawq*) form the second type of people, although Ghazali is aware that the people who belong to the second class are open to the danger of pantheistic error, which is to identify oneself with God, are nevertheless superior to the people of the first type. Therefore, he does not hesitate in his works to say that one should become a person of direct experience, but those who cannot be are told to become a person of science. Thus we already witness a new understanding in Ghazali. He places intellect below direct experience. Philosophical thinking is not considered to satisfy the individual so we are advised to become a person of direct experience.<sup>106</sup>

Dissatisfaction with discursive activity of the intellect becomes quite obvious when we look at the works of Suhrawardi. Although he has left a number of works, the most important of them are *Avaz-i Par-i Cibra'il*, *Kitab al-Talwihat* and *Hikmat al-Ishraq* (*The Philosophy of Illumination*).

*Avaz-i Par-i Cibra'il*, which has been translated into English under the title of *The Sound of Gabriel's Wing*, is a summary of Avicenna's philosophy, and in *Talwihat*, which means elucidation, he acknowledges Avicenna as "the finest of philosophers". But when we come to *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, we find Suhrawardi completely disagrees with



his conception of the universe. He tells us that although he was once a follower of the Peripatetic philosophy, he finally came to see the light.<sup>107</sup>

It is interesting to see that Suhrawardi associates perception with women and intellect with men. It is possible that the active intellect is also to be thought of as a man. In general, his perception of the universe is not very different from Avicenna. The active intellect is essentially the giver of the forms and everything else emanating from it, but with the *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, Suhrawardi breaks away from Aristotelian tradition entirely. The concept of "direct experience" (*mushahada*) occupies an essential role in it as it had done in Ghazali and Ibn-Tufail. It was used to indicate that "direct experience" can lead the high road to eternal truth but not discursive thinking. We are told that he was himself vouchsafed direct experience of the divine light after his 'Peripatetic' period, and the *Hikmat al-Ishraq* is not for those who have not received the divine light. They cannot benefit from it in any way whatsoever. Those who pursue discursive investigation (*bahth*) should turn to the Peripatetics where they can find the perfect version of discursive philosophy. Even so, I would like to say that he also conceived discursive and non-discursive thinking as means to grasp or to attain the eternal truth. As such, non-discursive thinking does not comprehend the eternal truth. In Suhrawardi, direct experience reveals only the basic propositions, therefore the thinker must develop his/her system from them. The science of illumination is a science based on premises which were discovered through direct experience. He also does not think that he is the first to be vouchsafed direct experience of the divine light. Hermes, Plato, Zarathustra, the mystical "faithful, blessed king Kay Khosrow" and Empedocles are also credited with the experience.<sup>108</sup>

In sum, whether the way of conjunction with the divine intellect (the active intellect) is discursive or non-discursive, the Islamic philosophers have never identified

*nous poietikos* with God nor the human intellect with *nous poietikos* and God. The active intellect remains as an immaterial and transcendent thing. In addition, discursive and non-discursive thinking do not go beyond being merely means to the eternal truth, and there is a final point to be made: conjunction with the divine being must be earned.

There are degrees of eudaimonia and each soul lives happiness according to the level of its own intellectual achievement. The eyes of intellect are definitely turned to what is above, namely to divine beings by Suhrawardi.

## **21. One Potential Intellect for all Humankind: Averroes (Ibn-Rushd)**

Aristotle, in *De Anima*, posits an intellect which becomes everything.<sup>109</sup> The controversy over the nature of the potential intellect has never ceased until now, along with the discussion of the nature of the *nous poietikos*. However, Averroes became particularly infamous for his interpretation of Aristotle's words of the potential intellect and it stirred up much inconvenience in the Middle Ages among scholars.

Alexander, as opposed to Themistius, understood the human potential intellect or material intellect as a mere disposition, whereas Themistius had construed it as a substance. The issue had not been raised until Averroes.<sup>110</sup>

Islamic philosophers already had a great interest in the interpretation of the active intellect but Averroes is haunted by the issue. In attempting to resolve the issue he goes from one extreme position to another. The differing understanding of the human potential intellect by him has great importance in the history of philosophy. He is largely ignored in the Islamic world but his writings stimulated two movements in Jewish and Christian philosophical circles. The two movements followed by partial reading of Averroes' writings, primarily concerned about the question of the nature of the potential human intellect.



He refers to the question of the potential intellect against the background of Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisiensis, Themistius and Avempace (Ibn-Bajja). Aristotle himself and writers in the Aristotelian philosophical tradition presupposed that the potential intellect reflects the external world without any distortion, for Aristotle thought that if the intellect with which the individual is born has some quality before it starts to think, the quality the potential intellect has would prevent its operation. In other words, it would not mirror reality if it was to be determined. So, in Aristotle, the human intellect has no determinations at the beginning and as such it can mirror reality as it is. Thus he came to conclude that the part of the soul called intellect exists as a potentiality for Aristotle before it thinks, and as such it is not mixed with the body and is separate from it.<sup>111</sup>

Aristotle tries to explain the potential intellect by saying that it resembles a tablet which has the capacity to be written on, but which so far has nothing actually written on it. The intellect which is at the outset potentially everything but actually nothing at all, is like the empty writing tablet. There is a further statement made by Aristotle, however, which was quoted, requoted and discussed through the centuries: the human intellect is impassable.<sup>112</sup>

Alexander focused on Aristotle's statements which describe the human potential intellect as being nothing until it thinks. He reasoned that anything that is receptive of forms of a certain type cannot contain them in its own nature. The reason is that it would have its own form and as such it would be unable to receive the other form. If all things are capable of being known by the intellect, it can originally have no form in itself. It would be nothing actually, but everything potentially; it is nothing actually, it is not anything substantial and as such the human potential intellect could only be a disposition to receive intelligible forms.

In order to eliminate some possible objections, Alexander felt required to give a further explanation. It is a fact that a tablet is already an existent being prior to any writing on it, whereas Aristotle had compared the material intellect to a tablet but it is nothing before it starts to think. In order to overcome the apparent difficulty, Alexander offers a distinction between the 'unwritten tablet itself' and the 'written character of the tablet'. Thus he comes to construe that the true analogue of the tablet is the soul whereas the material intellect corresponds to the unwritten aspect of the tablet. In other words, it is the disposition for being written on. When it is written on, the writing tablet undergoes change, but the disposition which the tablet has in order to receive writing does not undergo change. It is not affected when it is brought to actuality, since it is not some substratum or anything in actuality.

As a result the material intellect which corresponds to the disposition the tablet has to receive writing undergoes no affection when it starts to think, provided that it does not belong to the class of actual things because only something actual, only a subject or substratum can be said to be capable of being affected.

In sum, Alexander construed the potential or material intellect to be merely a disposition in the human soul. It has no actuality and in virtue of this it undergoes no change. If that is true, the material intellect is a power in the soul and decays with the soul. For him there is no hope of immortality for the individual, who is just born with the potentiality to think.

We have a different picture in Themistius' understanding. He pays heed to the characterisation of the intellect as being not mixed with the body but separate. It does not have a bodily organ for its activity. The potential intellect is completely unmixed with the body, impassive and separate, and he came to conclude from its latter two attributes - namely being wholly unmixed with the body and being separate - that it is



not destructible. He turns also to Theophrastus to support his interpretation because he had also considered the potential intellect as separate from matter. Themistius, in agreement with Theophrastus, claims that it joins the individual at birth. Averroes draws on Themistius and they took a similar line on the understanding in order to show that the potential intellect is an immaterial substance or a disposition inhering in such a substance. He finally claims that Avempace had construed the material intellect as a disposition. Being aware of divergent views on the subject, Averroes tried to determine the true nature of the material intellect in Aristotle and we will see later whether he does or not.

Averroes comes to defend the view that there is one potential intellect for all people, just as there is only one active intellect for all people. He concentrates on the attributes of the potential intellect which are: (a) to be unmixed with the body, (b) to be impassive, and (c) to be separate from the body.<sup>113</sup> In his view there is no difference between the potential intellect and the active intellect which is also described by Aristotle as separate, impassive and immaterial.<sup>114</sup> Thus Averroes came to conclude that the potential intellect is a single entity and there is only one potential intellect for all mankind. It appears that the correspondence between the active intellect and the potential intellect is untenable.<sup>115</sup>

## **22. The Impact of Averroes' Theory of the Potential Intellect**

Medieval Hebrew writers had access to the early, intermediate and later works of Averroes whereas Latin readers worked with a more limited corpus, but what both groups were deprived of was the realisation that Averroes changed his views radically and constantly on many issues. Thus the two groups who had different bodies of text obtained different perceptions of Averroes' view on the subject-matter. Hebrew writers

supposed his view on the material intellect as the hybrid conception whereas Latin readers regarded it to be the single eternal substance which serves all people by being intermediary between the active intellect and them.<sup>116</sup>

Moses Nanbony, Levi Gorsonides and Shem Tob Ibn Shem Tob report that a material intellect is engendered when the transcendent active intellect links itself to the inborn disposition of an individual in Averroes.<sup>117</sup>

Averroes' Long Commentary was translated into Latin around 1230. Albert the Great is said not to have realised that he proposes a single material intellect but some others certainly did. Aquinas, in his work *The Summa contra Gentiles* describes him as protagonist.<sup>118</sup> Although Aquinas and William of Baglione rejected his conception of the material intellect as a single entity, he nevertheless gained very much acceptance among scholars in Paris.<sup>119</sup> However, ecclesiastical authorities did not receive his theory of the material intellect with pleasure. Finally, in 1267 and 1268 Bonaventure objected against the improper use of philosophy which created a lot of errors, and one of these errors was to say that one intellect serves all people. In 1270, Stephen Tempier, who was Bishop of Paris, condemned and banned thirteen mistakes to be taught. The first of the errors was that "the intellect of all people is one and numerically identical". At around the same time a member of the Dominican Order communicated with Albert the Great who was living in Germany at that time. He was sent a list of fifteen propositions, which were objected to in many assemblies, and was asked for his comments. It is interesting to see that the first of the fifteen was once again the proposition that "the intellect of all people is one and identical in number".

Bishop Tempier (1277), acting at the Pope's behest, extended his list of condemnation. The errors were execrable, but they were being taught by scholars who overstepped the boundaries of their realm. Those who taught in the Faculty of Arts at



Paris were dealing with the subjects belonging to theology and were also claiming that things can be true according to philosophy but not so according to the Catholic faith, and the proposition which states that the substance of the soul as well as the active and possible intellects are eternal and the proposition that the intellect is numerically one for all men was included in the list of condemnation.<sup>120</sup> Siger of Brabant was a member of the Faculty of Art and a manuscript listing the theses condemned in 1272 has the heading *Against the heretics Siger and Boetius of Docia*.<sup>121</sup>

We have already witnessed that philosophy was first greatly admired by Islamic philosophers, then came to stand against religion and finally was done away with. The works of philosophers and philosophy also found little favour in the Christian world. Through studying Islamic philosophers as well as Christian scholars, I have come to see that philosophy was never to be understood as a natural intellectual activity of the individual. In a sense philosophy was used to justify religious dogmas (See the section on Ghazali). Thus those who had a philosophical attitude towards any question inevitably faced a very difficult life, such as fear of prosecution, condemnation or punishment if not to be killed inhumanely.

The death of Siger is very sad. He was assassinated by a demented companion (1281-1284) in Italy despite his recantation. Recantation of Averroes' theory of the material intellect was adhered to by a line of Christian thinkers. The tradition persisted for some time and strongly resisted repeated attempts to suppress it. Those who belong to the Aristotelian / Averroes tradition reason that the possible or potential or material intellect is separate from the body. More precisely, they think that it is immaterial, eternal but linked to the human being in some way. One potential intellect serves all human beings; this is what is called Latin Averroism.

By the end of the thirteenth century and at the beginning of the fourteenth,

Averroes' conception of the intellect was followed by philosophers such as Giles of Orleans, John of Goettingen, Anthony of Parma, Thomas Wilton, Morsilius of Padua, and Walter Bunley. They were reported to be very active in Paris. Between 1320 and 1350 Averroism was transplanted to Bologna where it was embraced with deep sympathy. However, as we have seen, Averroes' conception of the intellect elicited opposition from its first appearance in Latin.

We could also mention some others who rejected his conception of the intellect, for example Bonaventure, Aquinas, William of Baglione, Albert, Giles of Rome, William of la Mane, John Peckam, Peter of Trabos, Raymond Lull, Duns Scotus, Simon of Feversham and William of Alnwick. There is one more thing to be added to this, namely the formal condemnation of the church of the Council of Vienna in 1311.

John of Jaudun gives an extreme materialist account of the intellect through following Alexander, and Siger. He thinks that the Averroist position cannot be shaken by demonstrative reasoning. The Bolognese tradition does not represent the swan-song of Averroes' theory of human intellect in the Latin world. It is said that two philosophers followed Averroes very closely in at Erfurt in the fourteenth century, and in the following century a professor endorsed Averroes' view on the intellect at the University of Krakow. The interest in Averroism continued throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in northern Italy and Padua. Although fresh humanist zephyrs were blowing away the medieval cobwebs, Italian philosophers never ceased analysing and commenting on the Averroist theory of intellect. Paul of Venice, Nicoletto Vernias, Alexander Achillini, Tiberio Morcantonio Zimara, Marcantonio Genua and Antonio Bernardi della Mirandola.

In sum, the positions which Averroes reached in the final stage of his thought on *De Anima* sparked off practically no intellectual excitement in the Islamic world and



remained mostly unknown in Jewish circles, but it shaped European philosophy for three centuries.<sup>122</sup>

Although I do not like to form a rigid judgement of anything or anybody as far as Aristotelian interpretation is concerned, it nevertheless appears to be right to say that Islamic-Aristotelians construed what Aristotle said in the light of the principles of the Quran. Therefore, as we have witnessed previously, their philosophical and theological concerns made it almost impossible to recognise the thought of the Greek philosophers. On the other hand, however, I think Aristotle himself must be responsible for allowing such divergent interpretations of his thought because, for example, we are nowhere told whether *nous poietikos* belongs to the individual or whether it is itself divine. Therefore, Islamic-Aristotelians construed that the active intellect has knowledge of all incorruptible substances. Whoever has entered into conjunction with the active intellect or received the active intellect completely into the material intellect, knows through the active intellect whatever it knows. Thus in this exalted contemplation they find highest happiness and perfect bliss. It is the last and ultimate aim that an individual can realise, and it should also be recorded that Islamic-Aristotelians have never identified the active intellect with God, whereas it was regarded as possible to identify the human intellect with the active intellect.

### **23. Reflection on Aquinas' Theory of Intellect in Aristotle**

With St. Thomas Aquinas, the interpretation of Aristotle's theory of intellect reaches a point by which we could in a sense speak of it as a superrationalist interpretation of Aristotle's theory of intellect. What I mean by the superrationalist interpretation is that Aquinas identified the *nous poietikos* with the human intellect and refuted any sort of conjunction with it. It is rather considered as a part of the human intellect.

After stating these general remarks, let us now look into his interpretation of the *nous poietikos* in more detail.<sup>123</sup>

Aquinas regarded not only the intellectus agens but also the intellectus possibilis as immaterial. In addition, he also accepted that not only does the potential intellect but also the active intellect belong to the human intellect. In his view they both form the faculties of the human soul. The active intellect is not external to the human soul, and the potential intellect is all things potentially. According to him, what Aristotle means by saying that they are not attached to any bodily organ is that the two faculties of the human soul (the active intellect and the potential intellect) do not have an organ like the faculty of nutrition and sensation. They are in the soul but not in the body. Aquinas construes that the human soul has a place between the world of bodies and intellects, and as such it surpasses the receptive power of matter and is not included in it in any sense. Therefore, its powers cannot be thought of as the faculties of the ensouled body but primarily belong to it. Because of the way in which the two intellects are said to be separated from the body, the potential and the active intellect do not share anything with corporeal matter. More clearly, the body has no role to play or share anything in their activities, therefore it is true to say that the activities of the two intellects do not require any participation of matter. The potential and the active intellect are immaterial in their existence and in their activity. They are unmixed with matter in any sense.<sup>124</sup>

Aquinas regards the potential intellect as the proper thinking faculty of the intellectual part of the soul. Everything is potentially contained in it. However, this does not mean that they are in it from the beginning. The potential intellect is mainly the mere capacity for thinking. It is viewed as an empty tablet upon which nothing is written. The empty tablet analogy is connected to the statement in which Aristotle says that thinking is an affection, for the potential intellect gains intelligible forms through a



kind of affection.<sup>125</sup>

Aquinas also conceives the relation between being affected and affecting in a different way. Firstly, each affection requires an active principle. If this is true, what is the active principle in virtue of which the potential intellect gains the intelligible forms? In addition to this, we are told by Aristotle that the source of knowledge lies in the senses. It is for this reason that he also tells us that we do not think without images. Is it possible then to claim that something material can affect the immaterial? In Aristotle's view the merely sensory objects cannot account for the generation of our thoughts. Thus there must be something which could be responsible for the generation of our thoughts. That is why Aristotle says that the active is superior to the affected in dignity.<sup>126</sup>

It is construed that this higher principle of activity is *nous poietikos* - the active intellect. The images which are derived from the sensible things are intelligible potentially, for they are embedded in particulars and as such they are adhered to matter. The active intellect makes them actually intelligible through abstraction, and in virtue of this function the active intellect is the primary cause of intellectual knowledge. In this context the images count as the secondary cause.

It is obvious that Aquinas' explanation coincides to a remarkable extent in all the previously stated points with the fragment of Theophrastus, which is in the paraphrase of Themistius. As Theophrastus does, Aquinas construes not only the active intellect (*intellectus agens*) to be immaterial, but also the potential intellect (*intellectus possibilis*), and they both ascribe the potential and the active intellect to the human being.

The active intellect, as being part of the human soul, illuminates the images and derives the intelligible species from the images. It brings them into actuality, into light. The images are to the intellect as colours are to the sense of sight. The active intellect

works with the images and as a result of this process intellectual concepts can be derived from them. The active intellect derives the intelligible forms from the images. It is through the work of the active intellect that we can understand and think the essence of things without their individual determinations. In other words, the nature of things is represented in the potential intellect as intelligible actual forms.

It is obvious that Aquinas' interpretation of Aristotle's theory of intellect is profoundly different from the views of Alexander and the Islamic-Aristotelians. It gives rise to many questions and difficulties.

Aquinas conceives that the active intellect acts upon the images. It prepares the images so that the images generate thoughts in the potential intellect. He followed the principle that the corporeal cannot act upon an intellectual thing, but if we follow him it would be very hard to believe what he says on the function of the active intellect. How could the active intellect prepare the images and help to construct forms from something which is individual and attached to matter? It is obvious that if we follow Aquinas, the active intellect can realise its function through something intellectual. However, we have already pointed out that this is impossible so that the effect which has been ascribed to the active intellect is clearly impossible.

The other, I believe, fatal objection to Aquinas' view comes from Brentano. He argues that the effect of the active intellect through images cannot be defended. First of all, let us presume that the active intellect is able to make images intellectual. In that case, the images would not be the same, for they had been the images previously and later they become something intellectual. In other words, they would not be images any longer. As he rightly points out, Aristotle says that we always think with images. If this is true, Aquinas must be wrong since Aristotle never speaks of the image which has been transformed into a higher, intelligible thing at the time of thinking.<sup>127</sup>



It appears that we are engulfed with serious difficulties here once more. Suárez, nevertheless, tries to overcome them by saying that the abstracting activity of the active intellect need not be conceived as the influence upon sensible things. It should be viewed rather as an activity that is contained in intellect itself. There is only one soul which thinks through sense and through the intellect. He thinks that the presence of sensible objects could be enough to bring the intellect into activity and this activity is aimed at sensible things. Finally, he says that sensible objects cannot have any more influence on the intellect than just being a stimulus. He accepts that material things cannot influence and change anything in the immaterial. Therefore, he comes to conclude that it is impossible to think that:

the intellect (the active intellect) purifies the sensory representation, eliminating, as it were, the material element, in order to transfer it thus transformed and spiritualised from the imagination into itself (the potential intellect). The activity of abstraction does not produce any change at all in the sensory representation, it consists only in the intellect generating within itself the intelligible picture of the object of which the imagination possesses a sensory picture.<sup>128</sup>

However, it appears that to conceive the sensible objects in terms of being merely the cause for stimulation of the intellect cannot be true for Aristotle but only for Plato. It is known that in Plato we were taken to possess all higher knowledge from birth. All knowledge had been acquired in a previous life, thus after birth our souls need a stimulus in order to remember so that thinking is no more than recollecting. When we come to Aristotle, however, we are faced with a completely different account of thinking. He is profoundly concerned with the original acquisition of our thoughts. He thinks that when we are born our intellect resembles a blank tablet, devoid of any ideas. Furthermore, the active intellect, regardless of whether it belongs to the human being or not, has no thought in it. If this is the case, how could we assume that it is able to impart concepts to the potential intellect? It is not denied here that the intelligible is in a sense included in the particular, but the images do not influence the

intellect. It would not be enough to assume that the active intellect might have sufficient power at once to create intelligible forms in the intellect when it is stimulated by sensible objects. But then we also have to presume that the intelligible forms must be potentially present in the active intellect from the start, for the images are not to generate change in it. However, there is a very obvious objection to it. Why does a lack of sensation always lead to a lack of cognition? It becomes rather difficult then to understand Aristotle when he says that even after having knowledge of something, actual thinking is possible as long as we have the ability to retain the corresponding individual representation in the imagination.<sup>129</sup>

It appears that Aquinas' interpretation of Aristotle's theory of the intellect is no more satisfactory than those previous interpretations. It could be seen as oversimplifying to some, but attributing or discussing the active intellect in terms of belonging to the human soul or identifying it with God or seeing it as a vicar of God are equally useless. Perhaps the solution lies not in deciding where it belongs but rather in trying to understand what it is.

In Aquinas' account it is obvious that we cannot see an active principle which leads potential thoughts to actuality. It also does not explain the relation between perception and thinking. Brentano also criticises Aquinas by saying that Aristotle thinks that there is no activity without a striving toward activity, and if the active intellect is conceived to produce actual thinking in the human being, it must mean that "all people desire to know". In other words, all people strive for knowledge. It is through this striving that the active intellect operates. Brentano thinks that there are only two ways of doing this:

1. Striving towards activity could be an unconscious desire, as a result of which the activity of plants and inanimate nature could be indicated. However, if this is



the case there is no role left to be played by perception; for, if desiring towards activity is unconscious drive, what is needed for such activity is the presence and appropriate disposition of something which is capable of receiving the effect.

Thus the potential intellect, in connection with this conception of the present matter, is naturally designed to receive the influence of the active intellect. It also requires the unity of the potential intellect with the active intellect. There is, on this account, no part to be played by sensation, for the intellectual part of the soul could produce thoughts within itself from the start.

2. a) Presupposes that the striving in virtue of which the active intellect originates its effect may be as a result of conscious desire. If that is accepted, then it must also be agreed that it cannot be other than a sensory or intellectual desire. Brentano dismisses immediately that it could be a sensory desire. The question is, how could the sensitive part yearn for truth? Furthermore, on this account it is difficult to explain how the sensitive part designs the activity of the active intellect in a theory which restricts anything material to act upon the individual. Thus it cannot be a sensory desire, even if it is thought to be conscious.
- b) Assuming that it could be an intellectual desire, is also of no help in understanding the role of the active intellect. Brentano refuses it on the grounds that any intellectual desire presupposes intellectual thought, and what matters is here to explain how thought arises in the intellect. When the intellect begins to think, it does not turn to the truth of the thought towards which the desire, by virtue of which the activity of the active intellect is conceived to begin, would have to be directed. In his view, the intellect firstly knows the nature of external beings, therefore he

concludes that the account of Aristotle's theory of the intellect given by Aquinas is altogether dismissable.<sup>130</sup>

It is quite obvious that Aquinas construes Aristotle's theory of the intellect almost in a completely different way. It is possible to speak of a break with previous conceptions of Aristotle's theory of intellect.

He definitely refutes the transcendental account of the intellect. In Aquinas' account *nous poietikos* and the potential intellect form an integral part of the human soul. It is important to note that both intellects are not required during life. He also dismisses any relation of *nous poietikos* to a higher intellect in terms of fluctuation. He thinks that the human being possesses *nous poietikos* from the beginning.

When it comes to the question of participation, Aquinas does not reject the conjunction of *nous poietikos* with a superior intellect. However, this participation is received in a quite different way from previous accounts. The participation he envisages is not based on psychological principles but, although I do not feel very safe with this, on ontological principles. As such, it is not a sort of participation which requires fluctuating intensity, nor a participation which must be realised afresh each time. He does not conceive the participation in terms of psychological ground and as such it has no significant role to play in the theory of knowledge and psychology. He speaks of no living participation with a higher intellect, which is why it makes sense to speak of a break with earlier interpretations here. Alexander regarded the knowledge of the immaterial as providing a basis for the further activity of the intellect. It is also true to say that in Themistius we also see a living participation between the intellects in question. Finally, Islamic-Aristotelians conceived the relation between the human intellect and the *nous poietikos* in terms of entering into conjunction with a superior intellect. It was a relation which was based on knowing. However, it should be



remembered that Thomas diverges from a Latin-Christian on this point here. Those who combine St. Augustine's theory of illumination with Avicenna's theory of emanation consider the illumination of the human soul by God as the most important matter in epistemology. It is said that although he appears to play down the contrast between Augustine's view on illumination and his interpretation of the nature of light in Aristotle, he nevertheless comes closer to Augustine. In Thomas the light of nature in man replaces the particular illumination by God. The participation of the human intellect in divine intellect is replaced by a general illumination. In this case it is not an epistemological event but, as Kal puts it, it is now an ontological fact.<sup>131</sup>

As a result, he rescues the interpretation of *De Anima* III.4 and 5 from the Platonic and mystic views which in general allow the human intellect to know the purely immaterial things directly.

In Aquinas' view the primary objects of the human thinking are not of the divine beings but it is the essence of sense-perceptible things. It could be stated that the eyes of the intellect are cast downwards instead of upwards. On the contrary, Islamic-Aristotelians made the intellect to think what is above. Aquinas says that this is why Aristotle introduces *nous poietikos* in *De Anima* III.5. Although the forms are in readiness as an object of thinking in the Platonic sense, the essence of sensible things is to be separated from the matter by way of abstraction. Only as a result of this operation, the essence of a sensible thing could be known.

What did he achieve? It is certain that he freed Aristotle's theory of the intellect from a Platonic interpretation, but the question now to be asked is, did he reach satisfactory results? The answer to this is no. As is the case with every interpretation of Aristotle, he reached rather unsatisfactory results. Firstly, he made *nous poietikos* the integral part of the human soul on which Aristotle says nothing definite. He also could

not explain how the *nous poietikos* leads the human intellect into actuality. There are also other questions that his account of the intellect in Aristotle appears to have no answers to. For example, he is strongly opposed to Averroes' view in which even the potential intellect is not regarded as forming an integral part of the human intellect and the potential intellect as such is one in number. However, he is unable to explain how an intellect which is entirely immanent in the human soul is to be perceived as wholly immaterial and incorruptible.<sup>132</sup>

Aquinas says that the intellect belongs to the soul. If that is the case, then it is also right to regard it as the form of the body. The question arises whether the intellect can be purely immaterial. He accepts that the soul is really the form of the body, but the intellect has nothing to do with the body. In his view, although the intellect is a part and a faculty of the soul, it is not material. This part of the soul, namely intellect, is immaterial. According to him, the soul itself is not completely taken by matter, and he denies that while the soul is the form of the body the intellect is not. However, it appears that he cannot really explain how this immaterial part of the soul forms a unity with the matter-bound body. He was aware of the difficulties with his account and he came to say that the intellect does not have any existence without the body but is immaterial in its intellectual activity. The reason for this is that it has no organ and operates without an organ.<sup>133</sup>

Islamic Aristotelians defend the view that an intellect which exists independently from the body always knows and as such it does not need the knowledge of the senses.<sup>134</sup> Thomas opposes this but he cannot explain how the intellect, which is not dependent on the body, can function without it. The difficulty arises once more when he replies to the objection that the pure immaterial intellect is not to be plural in relation to the plurality of individuals, for matter is the principle of multiplication and the purely



immaterial intellect is just lacking it. Hamelin thinks that he merely introduces a Platonic element into Aristotle's theory of the intellect here, in other words an intellect which is independent of the body cannot be considered to be part of Aristotelian doctrine in this aspect, and in my view Islamic-Aristotelians who think that the human soul only participates in a divine intellect, seem to be closer to Aristotle.<sup>135</sup>

The point of Plato's conception of the soul is that although the soul does not form a unity with the intellect as it does in Aristotle, nevertheless the soul is attached to the body in Plato. In Aquinas, however, the human intellect is independent and sovereign. The individual human intellect is not dependent on the body to exist, and operates without one.

It should, however, be recalled that what Aristotle confronts in *De Anima* III.4 is the question of how the intellect and its objects exist in the external world. Aristotle postulates in *De Anima* III.5 an intellect of which attributes are not the same as the potential intellect.<sup>136</sup> One thing is imperative to remember: in Aristotle the human potential intellect cannot be brought into actuality by itself. It requires an active principle to do so and this is the *nous poietikos*, regardless of thinking of it as belonging to the human being or identifying it as divine or God. The conclusion to be drawn here is that a sovereign intellect acting or thinking in virtue of itself is of impossibility in Aristotle.

## **24. Thinking in Aquinas**

Aquinas maintains that thinking is that which is originated by the knower. In his view, thinking cannot be reduced to affection. In other words, it is not a divine affection. On this point he completely diverges from Neoplatonic and Islamic-Aristotelians. He puts the active principle, which is necessary for having knowledge of things

in the human soul. In a sense he makes the human soul an as-if divine element, and therefore he has not, I believe, reached a radical interpretation of Aristotle's theory of intellect. It was a problem for Aristotle to explain how the intelligible exists in an embodied soul. He deals with the question of the first principles and sense images in *De Anima* III.8.<sup>137</sup> It could be inferred, rightly, that Aristotle considers the human intellect and its objects in relation to matter.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, it is impossible to claim that a human intellect that thinks could ever free itself from the relation between the body and the soul, but is it true that an immaterial intellect which causes intellect to govern the material world is multiple? In other words, would it be right to speak of the multiplication of the immaterial as Aquinas does by attributing a *nous poietikos* to every individual human being?

It seems that Aristotle himself has no definite criteria to distinguish intelligible objects from sensible objects, for sense perceptions are of things and represent them without their matter. Thus, images which come to be representing intelligible thoughts are nothing but sense perceptions, but the point is that they are without matter.<sup>139</sup>

It appears that immateriality is of sense perceptions and of sense images representing intelligible thoughts, but how about the thinking of God? Divine thinking involves no materiality, it is described as being absolutely immaterial. How are we supposed to understand the difference between the two cases?

I do not think that there is an easy answer to this question. One might say that what is immaterial in us resembles only the absolutely immaterial thinking of God's intellect. This means that we could speak here only of relativity, for Aristotle says that there is that which is what it is necessarily, and on the other hand there is that which is subject to exceptions or deviations in virtue of matter.<sup>140</sup>

Aquinas finally states that the human being has intellect because God made them



so. God created the intellect, the human soul. He also reckons that that was also Aristotle's view on the subject. There is no consensus reached on this point among the scholars today, but the general tendency is that there is no concept of creation in Aristotle.<sup>141</sup> However, some others consider Aquinas' solutions very satisfying, for example Nuyens thinks that in the absence of creation, the *noetic* problem is bound to be problematic. He says that Aristotle failed to explain the relation between the soul and the intellect in the human being. In other words, he thinks that the soul which is joined to the human body and the intellect, which is independent of the body, remained a problem for Aristotle, but it is hard to see that this was a problem for Aristotle. For Aristotle, the human soul is not required to achieve pure immateriality.<sup>142</sup>

## **25. The Question of Consistency in Aristotle: On the Soul**

In a sense Aquinas' failure can be traced back to Aristotle's failure. He writes in *De Generatione Animalium* at 736 b 27-29 that *nous*, the faculty of pure thought enters from outside and is divine alone. For it does not share anything with body.. It has also been said in *De Anima* that '*nous* is more divine and is impossible' (408 b 29-413 b 24-27).

It should be noted that although Aristotle sees a close relation between sensation and thinking nevertheless the analogy with sensation is not perfect. And he comes to say that thinking is *toiouton heteron*, something different like this. Aristotle appears to get more and more concerned with the analogy. He has already pointed out that it would be unreasonable for soul to be attached to body. For this would mean that it can have some physical quality like heat or cold, and a physical organ. However, soul has not got any organ. Nevertheless intellect is conceived to be as a unity in *De Anima* III.4 and as such it cannot be independent of body. For it forms a

part of the soul. In other words body and soul form a single compound (*syntheton*).

Although it is not mixed with body in the sense of not acting through a bodily organ, it is not easy to get a consistent view from what Aristotle tells us in *De Anima*:

... mind (*nous*) seems to be an independent substance (*ousia*) engendered in us, and to be imperishable.

If it could be destroyed the most probable cause would be the feebleness of old age, but in fact, probably the same thing occurs as in the sense organs/ for if an old man could acquire the right kind of eye, he could see as a young man sees. Hence old age is due to an affection, not of the soul, but only of that in which the soul resides, as in the case in drunkenness and disease. Thus the power of thought and speculation decays because something else within perishes, but itself it is unaffected. Thinking, loving and hating, are affections not of the mind, but rather of the individual which possesses the mind, in so far as it does so. Memory and love fail when this perishes; for they were never part of the mind, but of the whole entity which has perished. Presumably the mind (*nous*) is something more divine, and is unaffected. (408 b 18-29)

Aristotle connects the impossibility of *nous* with its resemblance to the senses.

For instance, in defective sight it is not the soul that is affected but merely its physical agent. However, Aristotle has just reminded us that *aisthesis*, an activity of the soul is impaired by deficiency in its organs. In the light of these considerations it would be extraordinarily difficult to argue that intoxication has no effect on the soul.

## 26. The interpretation of Aristotle's Theory of Intellect from Past to Present

Towards the end of the survey of previous interpretations of Aristotle's theory of intellect, I would like to concentrate on those who have come to represent an influential line of thinking on the subject we have been dealing with. This will, I hope, enable us to realise that what is important is not to pursue or dismiss certain lines of interpretation or tradition, but to help us to see the need to find a new way of approaching the subject, that is the close analysis of the terms with which Aristotle has come to explain the question of thinking, the subject of the intellect.

It could be considered an unnecessary or perhaps not a perfect way of justifying



a new approach to deal with the matter, but I believe, nevertheless, that the survey of previous interpretations may prove useful to enable us to seek another way of approaching the subject, if not to help us to discover a deeper nature of the intellect with which Aristotle was profoundly concerned. It is in this hope that I shall continue, to evaluate, discuss and consider the opinions of previous Aristotelian scholars and philosophers.

It should be noted that the view that *nous poietikos* in *De Anima* III.5 does not form a part of the human intellect has not, by and large, found much favour among scholars and writers after Thomas had firmly rejected it. Nevertheless, there has been a school of thought which followed the tradition of Alexander and Averroes, Zabarella is one of the most important representatives of this school of thought.<sup>143</sup>

As has been stated earlier, Alexander identifies *nous poietikos* with God. Zabarella follows him on this point. According to him, *nous poietikos* exists independently from matter,<sup>144</sup> and he goes on to relate the discussion of the intellect in *De Anima* to *Metaphysics* Lambda where Aristotle considers the existence of pure immaterial forms. Aristotle comes to conclude that there are pure immaterial forms which are the intelligences and God. Zabarella thinks that *nous poietikos* cannot be one of the intelligences because they have the sole function of moving their respective spheres, and as such the intelligences are inferior beings by comparison to God. Therefore, *nous poietikos* must be God which, as being primarily intelligible, is the source of intelligibility in all other intelligibles.<sup>145</sup> It is *nous poietikos* that leads the potential human intellect to actuality. It makes the potential object of knowledge an actual object of knowledge. It is like the sun, which causes the potentially visible to be actually visible, and it plays a very important part in explaining the term *choristos* meaning *separate* in his account. I believe the real difficulty lies in the fact that

Aristotle does not mention God in *De Anima* III.5, nor does he state that *nous poietikos* belongs to the human soul. We should also remember that none of the Islamic-Aristotelian philosophers have identified *nous poietikos* with God, they regarded it as a transcendent being but not as God. *Nous poietikos* is received as the vicar of God but absolutely not as God. Nevertheless, Zabarella's view, which I shall return to later, is always worthy of the most serious attention.

Trendelenburg gives the account of *nous poietikos* through the analysis of the word *nous* and asks how we are supposed to understand *nous poietikos* and *pathetikos*. He thinks that *nous pathetikos* describes all lower powers which are necessary for thinking in Aristotle. However, *nous pathetikos* cannot be enough for the thinking of things, because as such it lacks the principle of activity. It needs to be led by *nous poietikos*.

Trendelenburg comes to conclude that although *nous pathetikos* is different from *nous poietikos*, the latter is more noble, also it belongs to each human being and cannot be the same for everyone.

Trendelenburg also attributes knowledge of the first principles to *nous poietikos*, since the possible intellect cannot provide them because it depends upon the comparison of sensations. So, Aristotle does not explain what *nous poietikos* is and what the limits of its domain are or how it generates knowledge. However, one thing is clear, that *nous poietikos* is the source of the first principles. For Aristotle says that some sciences work through perception and others by hypothesis, but the point is that they drive this basis from their own intellect.<sup>146</sup>

However, when it comes to how to understand the language of divinity, we are face to face with a real problem in Trendelenburg. Although he states that our *nous poietikos* is not the divine intellect, he nevertheless admits that it is akin to the deity. He



thinks that God is a *nous poietikos* also, for God is that *nous* from which the truth of things emanates. He also assumes that Aristotle has also pointed out this relation between the divine and the human intellect, but at the end he accepts that Aristotle nowhere explicitly states how the human intellect partakes of the divine.<sup>147</sup>

In virtue of regarding *nous poietikos* as something divine, he also assumed that it has nothing to do with matter. In his view, the *nous poietikos* comes to join the human being from outside. It enters into the foetus.

Brandis broadly follows Trendelenburg in his account of the intellect in Aristotle. According to him, *nous poietikos* forms a part of the human soul. He also maintains that it is the source of knowledge of principles while he ascribes contemplation to the potential intellect, but the interesting point in his account is that he sees the true human self in *nous poietikos*.

In connection with [the faculty of] representation it is to be described as possible intellect, in that it borrows from it and from sensory perception the stuff for mediating thought, and requires images [*schemata*]: in this respect it is neither simple nor eternal. To put it otherwise, it has neither simplicity nor eternity in so far as it acts as mediating thought. Only intellect in the narrower sense of the word, the theoretical or active [*energetische*] intellect, is said to be (and truly is) immortal and eternal when it is separated from the body, and upon it rests the actual ego or human self. It was imparted to us from outside and is said to be itself divine, or the most divine within us. This is meant to indicate its independence from the organic body, not that the universal world spirit is temporarily conferred upon us. (Brandis, C.A. *Geschichte der Entwicklung der Griechischen Philosophie*, Berlin, 1862-4)

The accounts of Trendelenburg and Brandis do not diverge markedly from the view of Theophrastus and Aquinas, at least in that they attribute the *nous poietikos* to the human being. However, there are some recent scholars whose interpretations of Aristotle's theory of intellect are closely related to the views of Alexander and the Islamic-Aristotelian philosophers. These are Ravaisson and Renan.. However, in the main, the numerous but mostly German studies on the subject from the 19th and early 20th centuries pursue Thomas' line of reasoning on the interpretation of *De Anima* III.4

and III.5.<sup>148</sup> In the 19th century Ravaisson and Renan construe *nous poietikos* in *De Anima* III.5 as a principle which is at first external to the human being. (see Ravaisson, M-F, *Essai sur la Metaphysique d'Aristote*, Paris, 1837-96 and *De Philosophia Peripatetica apud Syros Commentation Historica*, Paris, 1852)

Ravaisson, in his *Essai sur la métaphysique d'Aristote*, argues that Aristotle ascribes to the individual only a passive intellect in virtue of which the individual is able to comprehend forms, receive ideas. It is like matter that can become everything. He further says that the possible intellect is universal potentiality in the world of ideas, as prime matter is in the world of things. He sees an absolute contrast between the potential intellect and the *nous poietikos*, for the latter is the absolute intelligence and the principle of creative activity. It makes all potential forms actual.

It is obvious that Avicenna is followed closely here, and interesting to see that the attributes of *nous poietikos* in a sense force us to consider it as not something divine-like, but divine. Avicenna maintained that every form and every thought flows instantly from the active intellect but Ravaisson departs from him here. According to him, Aristotle does not reject that corporeal beings can be secondary causes so that they bring forth other beings. He applies this relation to the subject of the intellect. Ravaisson thinks that thoughts are secondary principles and as such they are able to awaken other thoughts in our intellect. The need for a principle which is a first mover is required only occasionally. Of course, this active principle or a first mover is God itself which distributes the principles from which all knowledge and discursive thinking proceeds. Ravaisson also argues that what is valid in the theoretical field is also true and valid in the practical domain. The divine element within us provides the light to separate good from bad. It also gives rise to the will, and as a result virtue appears as a tool of absolute thought.<sup>149</sup>



In his account of the intellect in Aristotle, Ravaisson tries to give an account of it that is in complete agreement with Aristotle's philosophy, but particularly with *Metaphysics* and interestingly this was exactly the same goal that Islamic Aristotelian philosophers had tried to realise.

Although Ravaisson deals with the question of the *nous* in Aristotle in more detail, he nevertheless follows Alexander very closely. He sees no difference between sensible, intellectual and rational, therefore he claims that the intellect distinguishes and compares the abstract form with the sensible form. The reason he gives for this is that the intellect unites them in one consciousness. The conclusion to be drawn from this argument is that sense and intellect reflect one and the same thing. They just represent, in other words, two aspects of the same being. Thus it is perfectly natural that the intellect in its existence is attached to the body. In this context an individual lacks any sense of immortality.

I have already mentioned that Ravaisson tries to reach a consistent account of the intellect in Aristotle in relation to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, therefore he emphasises the analogy of potential intellect and prime matter, and he believes firmly that they both necessitate God as a prime mover.

Renan also agrees with Alexander and Zabarella that *nous poietikos* is an intellect separate from the human being. He is accused of being rather like Aristotelian-Malebranche,<sup>150</sup> but Renan himself accuses Aristotle of taking on the views of older schools and of not bothering himself with reconciling them with his own views, so he thinks that it would be wrong to think that one could ever give a consistent account of the intellect in Aristotle, for he himself had a concern with being consistent.<sup>151</sup> However, we are not particularly concerned here with whether Aristotle is consistent or not, but it is clear that Aristotle is circumspect in his dealing with previous theories or

views. He questions them and points out apparent inconsistencies and continues the matter from there.

Finally, I would like to discuss Zeller's view on the subject of the intellect in Aristotle. Zeller does follow a different path from Ravaisson and Renan. Although the latter two mostly agree with Alexander's view on the intellect in Aristotle, they were less Islamic-Aristotelian compared with Zeller. He comes very close to the view of Averroes in general and construes *nous poietikos* to be a universal intellect.

In his view, the highest and most perfect thought rests in its object. The human being is to think this thought in the universal intellect, therefore all intellectual activity of the human being is identical and one with the intellectual activity of God. It could be oversimplifying the case, but in other words Zeller appears to speak of the one and the same object of thinking for the human being and God. They think the same thing. However, I do not know any place where Aristotle says or implies that we think highest intellectual principles within the divine intellect. Furthermore, he also does not tell us that God contemplates the principles of our knowledge or any principles. He says that it solely thinks itself. He construes *nous poietikos* to be the world spirit, but on the other hand he describes it as an immaterial thing.

So far, the views of ancient scholars, medieval scholars and recent thinkers have been presented. From time to time Aristotle's theory of the intellect in particular, and his philosophy generally, has been discussed in different worlds of thinking such as Islam and Christianity. Finally, views from the recent past have been discussed. It will be clear by now that almost none of them conveys to us what Aristotle really was interested in and what he enabled us to do in the search for understanding of the universe and the human being. The reason, I believe, is that they tried to understand what Aristotle was saying, but not to solve the puzzle that he was trying to solve; the



universe, human life, but most importantly the question of thinking.

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## Notes to Chapter VII

1.. Aristotle, *De Anima* II.4.429a, 10, 21-22; 429b, 6 and of course *De Anima* III 5.

2.. Controversy on Aristotle's theory of intellect and the history of the interpretation of *De Anima* III.4 and 5 can be found in the following studies:

1) Ando, T., *Aristotle's Theory of Practical Cognition*, Kyoto, 1958; The Hague, 1971, pp.20-31.

2) Brentano, F., *The Psychology of Aristotle, in particular his doctrine of the active intellect* (originally *Die Psychologie des Aristoteles* (Mainz, 1867), edited and translated by R. George, Berkeley, 1977.

3) Kurfess, H. carried out research on the *De Anima* III.5 and its exegesis. Kurfess, H., *Zur Geschichte der Enklärung der aristotelischen Lehre vom sog., Nous Poietikos und Pathetikos*, Tübingen, 1911. This study is followed by another work which is also the interpretation and modification of it in medieval times.

4) Grabmann, M., *Mittelalterliche Deutung und Umbildung der aristotelischen Lehre vom Noys Moitikos*, idem, 1936, Heft 4. Munich 1936.

5) Hamelin, O., *La système d'Aristotle*, ed. L. Lobin, Paris, 1976.

6) *La Théorie de l'intellect d'après Aristotle et ses commentateurs*, ed. E. Barbotin, Paris, 1953. It contains many references. It is also an excellent summary on the subject.

7) See and also compare Hicks, R.D., *Aristotle's De Anima*, Cambridge, 1907.

8) It also proves to be useful to see the two works by W.D. Ross which are:

9) Ross, W.D., *Aristotle*, London, 1923, 1977.

10) Ross, W.D., *Aristotle, De Anima*, Oxford, 1961. (in this work the ancient commentators are quoted and discussed by him).

11) Moraux, P., *La De Anima dans la tradition grecque quelques aspects de l'interpretation du traité de Théophraste à Thémistius* in Symp. Ar. VII, Cambridge, 1978.

12) Moraux, P., *Der Aristoteliosmus bei: der Griechen*, I. Berlin, 1973.

13) Gätje, H., *Studien zur Überlieferung der Aristotelischen Psychologie im Islam*, Heidelberg, 1971.

It is also possible to have good accounts of the various other interpretations in these works which include Hick's edition of the *de Anima*, Ixix.

We also have a work by Kafka, G. in 1922. His work is on the importance of the exegesis of Aristotle's theory of intellect. However, he came to conclude that "although the whole differentiation between the two kinds of *nous* is confined to a casual jotting, the explanation of it, owing to the obscurity of its presuppositions, has of necessity furnished a Danaid-task for commentators".

Finally it would be advisable to look at Nuyens, F., *L'évolution de la Psychologie*



*d'Aristotle*, Louvain / The Hague / Paris, 1948.

3.. Themistius, Paraphrase of Aristotle's *De Anima*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca* 5.3, ed. R. Heinze (Berlin, 1853). The medieval Arabic translation of it is also available with the pagination of the Greek indicated. Here is the full reference: *An Arabic Translation of Themistius ... on Aristoteles' De Anima*, ed. M. Lyons, Colombia, SC 1973. The fragment from the fifth book of Theophrastus' *Physics* is preserved in the second book of Themistius' *De Anima*. The fragments of Theophrastus's work which contain the interpretation of Aristotle's theory of the intellect can be seen in Hicks and in Barbotin: Hicks, R.D., *Aristotle, De Anima*, Cambridge, 1907, pp.589-596, and Barbotin, E., *La théorie aristotélicienne de l'intellect selon Théophraste*. Louvain / Paris, 1954, pp.245-273.

4.. Themistius, 108, 1-6 (Hicks, f.1; Barbotin, f.1b).

5.. I believe Theophrastus is right to say that there is contradiction between the statements mentioned above. However, we should also note that in *De Anima* III.4 Aristotle compares thinking with sensation in respect of the fact that they must both have objects. But he immediately adds that the natures of the objects of thinking and of sensation are completely different. We should also remember the sentence at *De Anima* III.5, 412b, 24-25.

I have already discussed the difference between sensation and thinking in the relevant place.

6.. *Posterior Analytics*, 133, 88 36. See also 11, 19, 100b, 15 and compare 1, 2, 72b, 23-25. Professor C.J.F. Williams has suggested during our discussion that Aristotle is using *nous* here in the narrow sense of 'knowledge of first principles'. In that case Theophrastus is not right in seeing any conflict between the statements made by Aristotle about thinking and sensation in the respect mentioned.

7.. See for example Kal's account of it. He does not make any distinction between the active intellect and receptive intellect in respect of the characterisation of the intellect concerned in the *Posterior Analytics*, Kal, 1982, 94.

8.. Especially book 12, chapters 7 and 8. It would be useful too to compare what Aristotle says in the *Posterior Analytics* and *De Anima*.

9.. Barbotin puts a great faith in the authority of Theophrastus, see pp.117-122 and Kal argues against him, see p.94.

10.. I have already tried to deal with the different meanings of the term *nous* in Aristotle in Chapter II, and in addition to that I would like to suggest that it would be useful to consult *Metaphysics* where Aristotle tries to elucidate the different meanings of the term *arché*, see V.1.

11.. See for example: Themistius, 108, 24; Hicks, f.12, Barbotin, f.XII.

12.. See on the active intellect, Hicks, f.12, Barbotin, f.XII, Themistius, 107, 32. On the presence of the active intellect in human beings from the beginning: Themistius, 107, 36-108, Hicks, f.1, Barbotin, f.3a.

13.. There are many different alternatives to Theophrastus's account of thinking in Aristotle. One of the functionalist interpretations of Aristotle's theory of thinking is that the active intellect and potential intellect constitute two departments of the mind, one is receptive, the other productive. See for example Wedin's account of it in his book called *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle*. In addition to that, Kal comes to claim that the human intellect does not know always, for it depends on the object of knowledge for the gaining of intellectual knowledge. And only through thinking could the human intellect participate in the active intellect, 1988 (p.94). See also Themistius, 108-27-28;



- Hicks, f.12, Barbotin, f.XII.
- 14.. See also *Priscianus* 37, 24-30 (Hicks, f.11, Barbotin, f.XI).
  - 15.. I do not intend to mention all rival views on the topic here, but nevertheless I would like to mention some of them. The form of participation or the sameness of the human intellect with God has formed the great bulk of discussion on Aristotle among recent scholars. For example, Khan speaks of the sameness of human intellect with God whereas M. Wedin appears to follow Theophrastus in ascribing productive intellect to human soul. Apart from that, Norman fiercely dismisses making God or its mind any different from the human intellect. (See particularly Chapter V).
  - 16.. Strato was the head of the school after Theophrastus and Aristoxenus and Dicaearchus were fellow students of Theophrastus. See Brentano, F., 1977, p.314.
  - 17.. Kal, 1988, p.98; Alexander, 90, 19-31, 9.
  - 18.. Alexander, 87 and 108.
  - 19.. Alexander, 88, 23-89, 21.
  - 20.. Alexander, 88, 24-89.
  - 21.. Alexander, 90, 19-91, 4; 90, 23-91, 4.
  - 22.. Kal, 1988, p.97.
  - 23.. Brentano, 1977, p.314.
  - 24.. See *Alexander of Aphrodisiensis*, translated by W.E. Dooley, SJ, 1989.
  - 25.. See for example Guthrie. Aristotle's *Metaphysics* discusses several authors such as Trendelenburg, Ross, Hamlyn, Cassirer, Rist and finally Nuyens, pp.327-330.
  - 26.. Ross, *Aristotle*, 1985, pp.183-5.
  - 27.. *Metaphysics*, XII.7-9.
  - 28.. Some scholars reply that this is the very reason why Aristotle introduces the immaterial divine nous. See for example *Metaphysics*, XII, 6. Alexander also accepts that the human *nous* identifies itself directly with the divine *nous*.
  - 29.. e.g. Wedin, M., *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle*, 1988, p.136.
  - 30.. *De Anima*, III.5, 430a 23.
  - 31.. W.D. Ross, I cxlviii, 1924.
  - 32.. *De Anima* III.5, 480a 15 and *Republic* VI 5086-c and also see *De Anima* III.5, 430a 16-17.
  - 33.. *De Anima* III.5, 430a 13-14.
  - 34.. *De Anima*, III.4.
  - 35.. The terms for immaterial and material ideas are the *enula eide* and the *aula eide* which are both the objects of the human thinking. The distinction was also held by the Greek and Arabian commentators and we could mention some Neo-Platonic philosophers and commentators such as Philoponus. Hicks also maintains the distinction (Hicks ad.a.14, 1907): "The term *onta* must include, according to him, material as well as immaterial things (c.429a 24). Hamlyn also takes up a similar stand, p.139, 1968; finally, see Tricot, 180, n.2, 1977.
  - 36.. Kal 1988 p.97
  - 37.. Kal, (1988) 99
  - 38.. *De Anima* III.5 430a 24-25
  - 39.. See Blumenthal *Photius on Themistius: Did Themistius write commentaries on Aristotle?* Hermes, p.107, p.168-182, 1979. Of the relation of Themistius' view to Neoplatonism see the article which is also by Blumenthal. *Themistius, the last Peripatetic commentator on Aristotle?* In Glen W Bowersoo, Walter Burert, Michael C. J. Putnam, Arktoiros, Hellenic Studies presented to Bernard M. W. Knox, *Themistius and the agent intellect in James of Vintonbo and other thirteenth century philosophers: (Saint Thomas Aquinas, Siger of Brabant and Henry Bute)*. Augustiniana p.23, p.922-



- 967, 1973. i.d. *Neoplatonism, the Greek commentators and Renaissance Aristotelianism* in D.J O'Meara, *Neoplatanism and Christian Thought*, Albany N.Y. p.169-177, 1982.
40. Blumenthal, *Neoplatonic logic and Aristotelian logic*. In *Phronesis* 1, 58-79 and 146-60, 1955-6; Davidson, *the principle that a finite body can contain only finite power* in S. Stein and R Loewe (Eds), *Studies in jewish religious and intellectual history*, 75-92, Alabama, 1979, *Themistius*, 103, 9-13. It might appear to someone as a crazy task to realise. However it proved very fruitful from the philosophical point of view. Nevertheless not all Neoplatonists were in favour of reconciling Plato with Aristotle. Although Iamblichus argued against the view that Aristotle disapproved of Plato's theory of ideas, this was unacceptable for Syrianus and Proclus. While they accept that there is a harmony between Plato and Aristotle on many things, at the same time they could see that it is impossible to see a complete harmony between Plato and Aristotle. In Plato, God was conceived to be responsible causally for the existence of the universe, whereas Aristotle just denied it. But for some this did not present any disharmony; for example, Ammonius claimed that Aristotle accepted Plato's theory of ideas in the form of principles in the divine intellect. These principles were the cause of existence. He thus wrote a book to prove that Aristotle's God was also an efficient cause. (Although the book is lost some of its main arguments are preserved by Simplicius in *Phys* 1361, 11, 1363, 12.)
- 41.. Sorabji, R, *Matter Space and Motion* (chapter 15) London 1988.
- 42.. Frantz, A *Pagan philosophers in Christian Athens*, proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 119, 29-38, 1975. However, there is a controversy on whether Simplicius returned to Athens or not. On this issue see the article by Cameron, A. *The last days of the Academy at Athens*, proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society, 195, 7-29, 1969.
- 43.. See Simplicius' whole attitude to Christianity. Hoffman, P. *Simplicius' Polemics*, in Sorabji R. (editor), *Philoponus and the rejection of Aristotelian science*, London 1987; *Aristotle transformed*, London 1989; Wildbery, C. *Philoponus against Aristotle on the eternity of the world*, London 1987. See also Sorabji R. *Matter, Space and Motion*, London 1988.
- 44.. The concept of God is given in *Metaphysics, Lambda*, 7. 1072a 26. Of the theory of remembering knowledge see Plato *Sophistes* 230b-e; Aristotle *Metaphysics, Gamma*, 4. When we come to Simplicius, one thing we notice is that he emphasised the immanence of the active intellect. They ignored the fact that a potentiality and the actuality of this potentiality cannot reside side by side in the same being. Nevertheless, the relation between divine intellect and human intellect was taken to be a direct relation. On the contrary, the human potential intellect is concerned with knowing physical things. By being the potential intellect the human intellect cannot know the purely immaterial. It appears that beginning with Theophrastus and onwards the Greek commentators were unable to eliminate certain Platonic and Neoplatonic presuppositions from Aristotle's philosophy. Perhaps these untenable interpretations of Aristotle's philosophy played a significant part in the birth of Neoplatonism. On the last point see Merlan, P. *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness*, The Hague 1969.
- 45.. Kal, p.99.
- 46.. *De Anima* III.5, 430a 24-25; *De Anima* 31b 7-19, 432a 304, 430a 3-7. Also see 1075a 3-5.
- 47.. See Blumenthal, H., *Photius on Themistius: did Themistius write commentaries on Aristotle?* *Hermes*, 107, 168-82, 1979. E.P. Mahoney, *Themistius and the Agent Intellect in James of Viterbo and other thirteenth century philosophers (Saint Thomas Aquinas, Siger of Brabant and Henry Bate)*. *Augustiniana* 23, 422-67, 1973. Neoplat-



onism, the Greek commentators and Renaissance Aristotelianism, in D.J. O'Meara, *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, Albany NY, 169-77, 1982. On the drawing upon Themistius by Philoponus see *Alexander of Aphrodisias*. On Aristotle *Metaphysics* I, translated by Dooley, W.E., 1989.

48.. Lloyd, A.C. (ed), 'Neoplatonic Logic and Aristotelian Logic', *Phronesis* 1, 58-79 and 146-60, 1955-6; Blumenthal, H., 'Neoplatonic Elements in the *De Anima* Commentaries', *Phronesis*, 21, 64-87; Davidson, H.A., The principle that a finite body can contain only finite power, in S. Stein and R. Loema (eds), *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History* presented to A. Altman, 79-92, Alabama, 1979.

49.. Although the book is lost, some of its main arguments are preserved by Simplicius, *Simplicius in Physics*, 1361, 11-1363, 12.

50.. Sorabji, R., *Matter, Space and Motion*, chapter 15. London and Ithaca New York, 1988.

51.. Frantz, A., *Pagan Philosophers in Christian Athens*, proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 119, 29-38, 1975. However, there is a controversy on whether Simplicius returned to Athens or not. On this issue see the article by Cameron, A., *The last days of the Academy of Athens*, proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society, 195, 7-29, 1969.

52.. See Simplicius' whole attitude towards Christianity. Hoffman, P., Simplicius' polemics, in Sorabji, F. (ed), *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science*, London and Ithaca, New York, 1987; *Aristotle Transformed*, London and Ithaca, New York, 1989; Wildberg, C., *Philoponus Against Aristotle on the Eternity of the World*, London and Ithaca, New York, 1987. See also Sorabji, F., *Matter, Space and Motion*, London and Ithaca, New York, 1988.

53.. The concept of God is given in *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 7, 1072a 26-4. Of the theory of remembering knowledge see Plato, *Sophistes* 230b-e; Aristotle *Metaphysics*, Gamma 4.

54.. On the last point see Merlan, P., *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness*, The Hague, 1969.

55.. Al-Kindi 800-70; he is the only one of Arabic descent, therefore he is named as the 'philosopher of Arabs' (Fuylasuf al-Arab). His writings were described as Greek philosophy for Muslims. See on this point *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st and 2nd editions, al-Kindi by Jolinet, J. and Rashed, R., Atiyeh, G.N., *Al-Kindi, the Philosopher of Arabs*, Rawalpindi, 1966; Ivry, A.L., *Al-Kindi's Metaphysics*, Albany, 1974 It contains translation with commentary.

56.. There is a great controversy over whether it is Alexander's genuine work or not. At first Moraux claimed that it was not a work of Alexander; however, later he changed his mind. Moraux, P., *Le De Anima dans la tradition grecque, Aristotle on Mind and the Senses*, ed. G. Lloyd and G. Owen, 297, 304, Cambridge, 1975.

57.. Plotinus, *Enneads*, edited by Henry, P. and Schwyzer, H.F., 2, Paris, 1959. It includes English translation of the extant Arabic paraphrases of Plotinus, which is provided by Lewis. G.

58.. Themistius, Paraphrase of Aristotle's *De Anima*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca*, 53, edited by Heinze, F., Berlin, 1899. Medieval Arabic translation, with the pagination of the Greek denoted. Lyons, M., *Translations of Themistius ... on Aristotle's De Anima*, Colombia, SC, 1973.

59.. The Greek original and the Arabic translation from the Greek are not available. However, there is a medieval Hebrew translation from the Arabic which is: Themistius in Aristotelis *Metaphysicorum Librum*: a paraphrasis, edited by Landaver, S., in *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca*, 5.5, Berlin, 1903.



- 60.. The reference for the first commentary is: Philoponus, commentary on *De Anima*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca*, 15, edited by Hayduck, Berlin, 1897. The second is a different commentary. It is not extant in the original, however it is preserved in a Latin translation. *La commentaire de Jean Philopon sur la troisième livre du traité de l'âme d'Aristote*, edited by Corte, M., Liege, 1934. This has also been translated very recently by no less a person than Willie Charlton. See also Charlton, W., *Philoponus on Aristotle on the Intellect (De Anima 3.4-8)* (trans.) London, 1991.
- 61.. Of the Avicenna see: Notes on Aristotle's *De Anima*, in *Aristo inda al-Arab*, edited by Badawi, A., 8, 101, 114, 116, Cairo, 1947. See also Mobakhat, in *Aristo inda al-Arab*, 120; A-Qam, R., *Ahwal al-Nafs in Majmu Rasail*, Hyderabad, 1935. Averroes also quotes a very important passage from Themistius's paraphrase of *Metaphysics* XII. On this see Averroes, *Tafsir ma bada al-Tabia*, edited by Buyges, M., 92-94, 1938-1948.
- 62.. See on Al-Farabi, *Al-Jam baina al-Hakimain*, edited by Nader, F., 105-106, Beirut, 1960. Avicenna's commentary is available in Arabic as well as in French, which are the following: *Aristi inda al-Arab*, edited by Badawi, A., Cairo, 1947; *Notes d'Avicenne sur la Théologie d'Aristote*, translated by Vajda, G., in *Revue Themiste* 51, 346-406, 1951.
- 63.. Avicenna K. al-Isharat wal-Tanbihat, edited by Fonget, J., *Le Livre des théorèmes et des avertissements*, 180, Leiden, 1892. It is also available in French with pages of Forget's edition denoted: *Livre des directives et remarques*, translated by Gaichon, A., Beirut, 1951; Avicenna, *Shifa: De Anima*, ed. Rahman, F., 240, London, 1959.
- 64.. Davidson, H.A., *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on Intellect*, Oxford, 1992, p.6.
- 65.. Al-Kindi was very close to the main body of Islamic theological thought. He found great favour during Mutazilites' administration. However, this was changed in the reign of Al-Mutamakkil (847-61). It might be because of this change that a great misfortune befell him. Two hostile courtiers stole his library and took it to Basra for a time, but in the end al-Kindi was able to get it back. This incident indicates that he had a huge library by the standard of his time (Watt, W. Montgomery, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, Edinburgh, 1987, p.40).
- 66.. Walzer, R., *Greek into Arabic, Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Oxford, 1962, pp.177-178 and see also Chapter 12. Also compare and consult what Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* XII.6, but particularly 1071b 12-22.
- 67.. *al-Sigasa al-Madariyya*, 71, 55, 32; *Philosophy of Aristotle*, 127; *al-Madina al-Fadila*, 198-21.
- 68.. Passive intellect, material intellect, rational faculty, 3-5, 430-24.25; however, Themistius separates passive intellect from potential intellect: Themistius, Paraphrase of *De Anima*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca*, 5.3, ed. R. Heinze, Berlin, 1899.
- 69.. It should be noted that the medieval physical universe is conceived as finite. Thus, al-Farabi assumes that wholly comprehensive knowledge is within the reach of individuals. *Al-Madina al-Fadila* 242-45; *Risala fi al-Aql*, p.69.
- 70.. H.A. Davidson, *Al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes on Intellect*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p.59).
- 71.. Watt, W.M., p.70.
- 72.. Of the former point are Davidson, section al-Farabi and of the latter point see Watt, W.M., p.72.
- 73.. Avicenna: Goichon, A.M., art. Ibn Sina in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. It also provides an extensive bibliography: *Avicenna: scientist and*



philosopher, edited by Wickens, G.M., London 1952.

74.. Corbin, H., *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, London, 1961; Soheil M. Afnan, *Avicenna, his Life and Works*, London, 1958; Gardet, L., *La Pensée religieuse d'Avicenne*, Paris, 1951; Walzer, F., *Greek into Arabic*, Oxford, 1962, 1-28.

75.. See the chapter on Averroes. The Islamic philosophers had a connection with the Peripatetic school of Alexandria through the Syrians. Renan, 73.

76.. Rahman, F., *Avicenna's Psychology*, Oxford, 1952, p.92; Hamelin, O., *La Théorie de l'intellect d'après Aristotle et ses commentateurs*, edited by Barbotin, E., Paris, 1953, 64.

77.. Of Aristotle's point that experience leads to the highest principles, E.N. VI9, 1142a 11-20 and compare it with VI 11, 1143b 11-14. Of the discussion where experience belongs to *Metaphysics*, Alpha 1, 891a 1-12.

78.. According to Kal the potential intellect cannot be in any way regarded an intellect which potentially knows in less eminent way. He argues against Neoplatonic interpretations of Aristotle by pointing out that Aristotle intended to establish discursive science on the intuitive ground, and this is, he says, obvious from his inquiry into the principles of science, p.101; Plato Resp. VI and VII. Plotinus *Enneads* I.3 (20) 5, IV 4(28) 12.

79.. Hicks, 1 xvi.

80.. Juzjani, who was a student and friend of Ibn-Sina, compiled his works. Finally a longer medieval list was added to it. Juzjani's biography of Ibn-Sina is edited and translated by W. Gohlman, *The Life of Ibn-Sina*, Albany, 1974. It is known that he tried to develop an 'Eastern' philosophy, unfortunately we do not have anything preserved about it. On the discussion of the subject Gutas provides a sensible presentation of the subject. Gutas, D., *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, Leiden, 1988. Of the two most important works of Ibn-Sina, see *Avicenna, Shifa Ilabiyyat*, edited by C. Anawati, Cairo, 1960. For the French translation of it with pagination of the Arabic indicated see *La Métaphysique du Shifa livres VI à X*, translated by Anawati, G., Paris, 1985; *Avicenna*, Najat, Cairo, 1938. Whatever Ibn-Sina's view on the numbers of intelligence, the active intellect is considered by him as the last in the series.

81.. Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.1.6, 5.2.1, 5.3.15. It will also be useful to consult *Risala fi al-ilm al-llahi*, edited by Badawi, A. in *Plotinus apud Arabes*, Cairo, 1955, 176-77, which is merely a paraphrase of *Enneads* 5.3.15. On the English translation of the Arabic paraphrases of Plotinus are in: *Plotinus, Enneads*, edited by Henry, P. and Schwyzer, H., Paris, 1989. The Arabic paraphrases of Plotinus are translated by Lewis, G. It faces also the Greek original.

82.. There is a tendency among some scholars to read Ibn-Sina as locating the active intellect within the human soul. However, I believe that this is rather unlikely. For all intelligences are transcendent in his view. On the issue see Goichon, A., *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn-Sina*, Paris, 1937; Rahman, F., *Prophecy in Islam*, London, 1958 - he advocates the claim that Ibn-Sina in his shifa and Fi Ithbat al-Nubuwwat places the active intellect within human soul. However, this claim has been found groundless by Davidson (p.94). 1992 Avicenna's translation of *Fi Ithbat al-Nubuwwat* is: On the Proof of Prophecies, in *Medieval Political Philosophy*, edited by Lerner, F. and Mahdi, M., New York, 1963.

83.. He, I feel, sounds here like a Neoplatonic Spinoza.

84.. Davidson, p.81.

85.. See Notes d'Avicenne sur la Théologie d'Aristotle, translated by Vajda, G. in *Revue Themiste*, 51, 406, 1951; Rahman, Avicenna's Psychology, Stout, G., *God and Nature*, 238-39, Cambridge, 1952; Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, 32-33, London, 1958.



- 86.. Aristotle, *De Anima*, 3.7 431b,2; *De Memoria*, 1, 449b, 31-450a, 1.
- 87.. 429a 30-31.
- 88.. I would like to give a series of references on Aristotle's statements of the subject which is the following: *De Anima*, 3.4.429a, 17, 18, 15-16; 3.5 430a 20; 3.4 429a, 15-29-31; 3.7.451a, 5-3-5; 430a, 15-17; on Plato's notion that man can look at the ideal forms: Plato, *Republic*, 484c;
- 89.. For Aristotle the intellect is part of the soul, 413 613-16.
- 90.. See and compare: Aristotle, *De Anima*, 3.6.430b, 26-30.
- 91.. The line referred to above is: 1.34 89b, 10. Medieval Arabic translation of the Organon, edited by Badawi, A., Cairo, 1948-1952. On Ibn-Sina's view see Najat 36, 87; Davidson, H., 99.
- 92.. Najat 35-36.
- 93.. Davidson rejects any place of mysticism in Ibn-Sina. However, there are some scholars who see a fully mystical doctrine in Ibn-Sina's work: Isharat, 198-207. According to Davidson, Isharat is a glorified description of a person who is anarit, p.105; Goichen, however, translates the term *arif* as "celui qui serrait l'extase". She also translates *irfan*, which is an abstract noun from the same root, as "la science secrète" and "la science mystique", pp.455-456, 458 and 497. Gardet, L. takes the term *arif* as meaning "l'initié ou gnostique" - in his *La Pensée religieuse d'Avicenne*, Paris, 1951, 147. Finally, Corbin, H. construes the term *arif* as initiate and gnostic as well: Corbin, H., *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, New York, 1960.
- 94.. *Woul* is from the same root as *ittisal* - they both mean conjunction.
- 95.. Aristotle, *De Caelo*, 1.12.
- 96.. I would like to say here something about the theory of transmigration. As we have seen, Ibn-Sina thinks that human souls are immortal. He also sees the individuality of the soul in immortality. The body is necessary to receive the soul from the active intellect. At the same time every soul is also differentiated by the body whose soul it is, and the differentiation will be carried into the state of immortality. First of all, transmigrating souls need to attach themselves to bodies; however, the emanation of a soul and its body are emanated by the active intellect spontaneously. To see transmigration as something possible is absurd, for that would mean that a single body receives two, three or four souls, namely the soul emanated by the active intellect and the transmigration soul or souls. Davidson, p.109.
- 97.. *Nicomachean Ethics*, II.6.
- 98.. Fazl al-Maqal, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, translated by Hourani, G., London, 1961, p.61.
- 99.. Ibn-Sina's works are: *Shifa and Najat*, *Isharat*, in which he uses a very high-flown language; *Daresh Namah*, which is written in Persian and sums up his philosophical system. He also mentions allegorical tales in which we are told about human characters and of a bird which represents the active intellect as well as the human intellect. There are also two works on Ibn-Sina's philosophy: *Bahmanyar, al-Tahsil*, Tehran, 1972; and *Ghazali, Magasid al-Falasifa, Cairi*. Bahmangar was one of Ibn-Sina's disciples and Ghazali one of his most deadly critics. *Bahmanyar* (1065); *Ghazali* (1055-1111).
- 100.. Al-Ghazali is considered to be, by both Western and Muslim scholars, the greatest Islamic theologian. They even went further, and acknowledged him as the greatest Muslim after Mohammed. One of the most important of his works is *Ihym ulum ad-din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)* which consists of forty books, each of which forms a medium sized book when translated into a European language.



He was born in a town called Tuo which is now in North-east Iran. He studied under al-Jumayni. It is thought that, although jurisprudence was central in his studies, al-Jumayni encouraged him to read philosophy. He became professor at the age of 33 at the Nizumizza College in Baghdad which was considered to be one of the most prestigious positions in the Sunnite Islamic world. Al-Ghazali gives an account of his intellectual life in *Al-Munqidh min ad-dalul* (*The Deliverer from Error*). It is best described as an apologia pro vita sua. He tries to justify his decision of abandoning his professorship at Baghdad in 1095 and his return to Nishapur in 1106. He says that his intellectual journey started with a period of absolute scepticism, then he decided to examine the views of four chief seekers which were the Ash'arite theologians, the Neoplatonic philosophers, the Isma'iliites and Sufis.

101.. Watt, 88.

102.. Watt, p.89.

103.. For a different and broad view, see Watt, p.91, and Davidson, 130ff.

104.. Watt, *Al-Munqidh min ad-dalal: the faith and practice of al-Ghazali*, London, 1951; Macdonald, D.B., The life of al-Ghazali with special reference to his religious experiences and opinions, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, xx (1899), 70-132; Smith, M., *Al-Ghazali the Mystic*, London, 1944; Watt, M., *Muslim Intellectual, a study of al-Ghazali*, Edinburgh, 1963.

105.. *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal: the faith and practice of al-Ghazali*, translated by Watt, M.W., pp.45-55. London, 1953.

106.. *Ghazali, Mishkat al-Anwar: the Niche for Lights*, translated by Gardiner, W., 106, 2nd edition, Lahore, 1952. Ghazali departs mainly from Quran 24:35, a verse which is on the imagery of an oil lamp. For a discussion of the two types of people, see Mishkat 148, 90. For a different view on the matter see Watt, W., The authenticity of works attributed to al-Ghazali, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1952, 38-44. Compare his view with Davidson, p.131.

107.. Suhrawardi, Kitab al-Talwihat: *Metaphysics*, in *Opera metaphysica et mystica*, edited by Corbin, H., p.69, Istanbul, 1945. Suhrawardi also tells us about his dream in which he saw Aristotle. As an answer to his question, Aristotle said that none of the philosophers of Islam reached even "one thousand part" of Plato's "level". On the subject see Corbin's introduction, viii-ix, as well as Davidson, p.161. Suhrawardi, Hikmat al-Ishraq, in *Oeuvres Philosophiques et Mystiques*, edited by Corbin, H., Tehran, 1952, 10, 156. It is translated by Corbin in *Suhrawardi, Opera x-xi*; Suhrawardi, K. al-Talwihat: Physics, Los Angeles, UCLA Library, Mirasian collection. Suhrawardi, Araz-i Par-i Jibra'il (Persian): The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Suhrawardi, translated by Thackston, W., London, 1982.

108.. The list is very interesting. He does not credit Ibn-Sina with the experience of the divine light as well as Ghazali. However, it is said that the conception of light by Empedocles could be responsible for Suhrawardi's inclusion of Empedocles in his list. The largest collection of medieval fragments which bear Empedocles' name are in a Hebrew translation from the Arabic. Kaufmann, D., *Studien über Salomon Ibn Gabirol*, Budapest, 1899, 1-51. The fragments state that the deity is "the first pure true light"; the higher world is "a light-like world, full of light"; the soul is light-like and the world is pure light". The order of fragments are the following: 31, 29, 29.

109.. Aristotle, *De Anima* 3.4.429a, 16, 5-430a, 14-15, 10-11.

110.. Al-Farabi appears to consider it as a disposition and as a substance. Ibn-Sina did not deal with the question directly but in essence he construed not only the human material intellect but the human soul as an incorporeal substance.

111.. Aristotle, *De Anima*, 3-4-429a, 18-429b, 5. It is possible to concentrate on the



characterisation of the intellect in two ways and it could lead to a very different conception of it. One could focus either on the characterisation of the potential intellect or on the phrase that it is nothing before it thinks. This issue will be discussed later, in a more relevant context.

112.. On the writing tablet, see *De Anima*, 3.4.429b, 30-430a2 and on the question of the impassivity of the intellect see 429a, 15, 29-30.

113.. *De Anima* III.4, 429a, 24-25, a29; b4-5.

114.. *De Anima*, III.5, 430a, 17-18.

115.. *Metaphysics* XII.8, 1077a 31-38.

116.. See Davidson, pp.299 and 356.

117.. Moses Narboni, *Ma'amar be-Shelemut ha-Nofesh*, edited by Lury, A., Jerusalem, 1977; Davidson, H., Averroes and Narboni on the material intellect, *AJS Review*, 9, 1984, 182-84; Gonsonides, L., *Commentary on Averroes Epitome of the De Anima*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hebrew Ms. Opp. add. 40 38, 245b; Milhamot ha-shem (Die Kämpfe Gottes), Leipzig, 1866 of which English translation, *Levi ben Vorshom, The Wars of the Lord*, translated by Feldman, S., Philadelphia, 1984-1987.

118.. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, 2-59; *Summa Theologiae*, 1-76, art.1; *Summa contra Gentiles* 2.69; *Tractatus de Unitate Intellectus contra Averroistas*, edited by Keeler, L., Rome, 1936 of which English translation with the same section divisions: *On the Unity of the Intellect against the Averroist*, translated by Zedler, B., Milwaukee, 1968.

119.. Brady, I., Background to the condemnation of 1270: Master William of Baglione, *Franciscan Studies*, 30, 1970, 35-45.

120.. Mandennet 2, 175, 184-185; Denffle and Chatelain 543, 545, 549 of which English translation *Medieval Political Philosophy*, edited by Lonner, R. and Mahdi, M., New York, 1963, 337-54.

121.. See Gilson, E., *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, New York, 1955; Etzwiler, J., Baconthorpe and Latin Averroism, *Carmelus*, 18, 1971, 241-44.

122.. Here are some references of the writers mentioned in the discussion of the theory of the intellect. Giles of Rome, *Enrores philosophorum*, edited by Koch, J. and translated by Riedl, J., Milwaukee, 1944; Clintock, S., *Perversity and Error*, Bloomington, 1958; Mahoney, E., *Nicoletto Vernia on the Soul and Immortality in Philosophy and Humanism (Kristellor Festschrift)*, edited by Mahoney, E., Leiden, 1976, 145-49; Mahoney, E., Agostino Nifo's early views on immortality, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 8, 1970, 453-55.

123.. Aristotle's theory of intellect as interpreted by Islamic philosophers contained mystical elements and as such it attracted many adherents in the Christian West. The great scholars, including St. Thomas Aquinas, felt that it is necessary to fight against it with all their might. The Doctor Angelicus even proposes that Averroes should not be regarded as a Peripatetic. He is, in his view, a despoiler of Peripatetic philosophy. "Non tam peripateticus quam Peripateticae philosophiae depravator". Brentano, F., *The Psychology of Aristotle*, translated by George, F., Berkeley, 1977.

124.. On the potential intellect, *De Anima* 429a 21; of the statement that the intellect is separate or separated from the body, *De Anima* 429b 5, 430a 17. In the forthcoming chapters I will deal with the issue of separation of the intellect from the body, but for the moment I would first like to say that it is almost impossible to justify any reading or understanding of Aristotle's statement in *De Anima* 429b 5, 430a 17.

125.. *De Anima* 429a 13. It does not seem to be easy to distinguish thinking from sensation. Although there are differences between them, nevertheless thinking remains a kind of affliction. *De Anima* 429a 14-15



- 126.. Of the source of our knowledge, *Posterior Analytics*, 100a 10; it is Aristotle's claim that we do not think without images: *De Anima* 431a 16; see on the superiority of the active principle to the affected, *De Anima*, 430a 18.
- 127.. *De Anima* 432a 8; Brentano, 1977.
- 128.. Brentano, p.15.
- 129.. Of the objection against Plato by Aristotle, see *Metaphysics*, 993a 7; *De Anima*, 431a 16 and *De Anima* 432a 8.
- 130.. Notes on some of the points raised here:
- i) Aristotle appears to attribute the striving view to natural things: see *De Anima* 415b 1, *Generatione et Corruptione* 336b 27. Some other passages could be thought of in support of such views: *Metaphysics* 1046b 4, 1047b 35, *De Anima* 433a 30.
  - ii) On the presence and correct disposition of that which is capable of receiving the effect, see *Metaphysics* 1048a 5 and consult *Physics* 251b 5.
  - iii) On the question of presupposing intellectual thought, see *Metaphysics* 1072a 29.
  - iv) Intellect knows first the nature of external things, *De Anima* 429b 5; *Metaphysics* 1074b 35.
- 131.. Kal, 1988, p105.
- 132.. *De Anima* III.4 and III.5 in general.
- 133.. He refers back to *De Generatione Animalium* II.3, 736b 27-29. *De Generatione Animalium* is concerned with the pre-existence of the nous inasmuch as the nous pre-exists, the nous is the nous of God.
- 134.. See *De Anima* III.5, 430a 20-22 and compare it with *Metaphysics* XII.9.
- 135.. Hamelin, 1953, pp.76-77.
- 136.. I discuss the features of both intellects in Chapter III.
- 137.. *De Anima* III.8, 432a 12-14.
- 138.. *De Anima* III.7, 431b 17-19.
- 139.. *De Anima* III.8, 432a 9-10; ---.
- 140.. We should be careful here. Aristotle generally differentiates the intermediate level between corruptible and the eternal by the word 'the usual'. On the one hand there are things which one accepts generally exist in a determinate mode, however on the other hand there are things which admit exceptions or deviations in virtue of the material circumstances, and it is absolutely the case that the usual is absolutely different from the purely necessary and the accidental. On this point one could go to *Metaphysics* Delta 30, 1025a 14-15; *Prior Analytics* I 3, 25b 14-15 and I 13, 32b 9-6. Aristotle says that science and syllogism retain the usual. It means that which happens naturally and usually, 32b 18-21 as well as *Posterior Analytics* I 30; *Metaphysics* Epsilon 1, 1029b 26-28, 2, 1026b 27-33 and 1027a 20-26.
- 141.. Van Steenberghen, F., *Aristotle in the West: the origins of Latin Aristotelianism*, Louvain, 1955, 14.
- 142.. See Kal, 1988, p108.
- 143.. Edwards, W.F., The Averroism of Iacopo Zabarella (1533-1589) in *Atti del XII Congresso Internazionale di Filosofia* (1958), Florence, 1960; Renan, E., *Averroes et l'averroisme*, Paris, 1866.
- 144.. *De Anima*, 340a 17.
- 145.. *Metaphysics*, 1072a 26-32.
- 146.. *Metaphysics* 1064a 7 and compare it with 1025b 10.

147.. *Metaphysics*, 1072b 18-30.

148.. Those who know German might be referred to Oehler, K., *Die Lehre vom noetischen und dianoetischen Denken bei Platon und Aristoteles*, Munich, 1962. It includes the survey of literature on the subject.

149.. Ravaisson, 586-7 and 17-19, also consult *Eudemian Ethics* 1248a 24 in relation to his last remark.

150.. Brentano, 1979, p.18.

151.. He especially refers to the theory of the nous. He claims that Aristotle borrowed it from Anaxagoras. In addition, he sees a clear contradiction of the generation of intellectual knowledge in the *Analytics* and in *De Anima*. Of the point on Malebranche, see Renan, p96. I do not think that Aristotle states what his predecessors had to say on the subject for the sake of narration. He deals with them and then goes on to present his view on the relevant issue. He especially clearly says that Anaxagoras does not tell us anything of the nature of nous and how it generates knowledge. *De Anima* 405b 21.



## CONCLUSION

Aristotle describes the activity of *nous* in terms of *energeia*. One of the loftiest achievements of the individual human being as a noetic subject is to activate its capacity for thinking and knowing reality. Although the search for understanding necessitates laborious effort - I also call this process of the human searching activity *kinetic thinking* - the search is directed to an end and in virtue of this destructive nature of *kinesis* leaves its place to the *active thinking* which enables us to contact, to live reality. Thus it has been argued that the human noetic activity contains two aspects, namely *kinetic* and *active*. On the contrary, divine noetic activity excludes any sense of *kinesis* and instantiates the perfect example of being pure *energeia* and *nous*. Thus I identify divine *noetic* activity with perfect non-discursive *noetic* activity. Therefore, the analysis of divine noetic activity in *Metaphysics* XII.7 and 9 remains crucial to understanding Aristotle's conception of discursive and non-discursive *noetic* activity. Aristotle provides the account of the human *noetic* activity mainly in *De Anima*, *Metaphysics* and *Ethics*. Although Aristotle deals primarily with the problem of knowledge in *Posterior Analytics*, we find nothing about the characterisation of *noetic* activity as *energeia* there. He uses in fact the term *energeia* only once in *Posterior Analytics*. It is true that Aristotle regards the human *nous* and human *noetic* activity as something divine, but he speaks of divinity of bees as well. Thus it appears to be hard to see an absolute correspondence between human and divine *nous*. And for this reason it also seems to be rather difficult to argue that human *noetic* activity is not different from divine *noetic* activity. The language Aristotle uses to describe the human *nous* does not necessarily suggest a genetic relation between the human *nous* and divine *nous*. However, this is not to deny that human *nous* and its *noetic* activity do not remain as something divine in

Aristotle and for Aristotle. The individual *noetic* activity is, perhaps, a divine-like activity and in virtue of this - I mean having the ability to realise ourselves as a *noetic* subject - we can transcend our physical being to become god-like by acting out our identity in the world. And, as a *noetic* subject, we can only actualise our identity through *noetic* activity. This is why it is essential to analyse the concept of *nous* and *energeia* in relation to the question of thinking, particularly discursive and non-discursive *noetic* activity in Aristotle, otherwise one seems to be destined to remain in the dark and confused unless one takes into account the analysis of the terms *nous* and *energeia*.



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